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ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER AT THE NEW YORK, N. Y., POST OFFICE.

December 20, 1893.

No. 791.

Published Every
Wednesday.

Beadle & Adams, Publishers,
93 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Ten Cents a Copy.
\$5.00 a Year.

Vol. LXI.



THE BAFFLED PIRATE, SPRINGING UPON THE BULWARK, HELD HER POISED OVER THE HISSING WATERS.

The Coast-Raider's Death-Chase;

OR,

Captain Le Roy's Double.

A Story of "The Pirate Patrol."

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,

AUTHOR OF "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE STRANGE SCHOONER.

A YOUNG girl sat upon the piazza of a handsome suburban house situated upon the shores of New York Bay.

From where she sat her eyes could rest upon the distant metropolis, with its numerous masts, about the wharves, looking like a fringe surrounding the city, the lowlands of Jersey stretching away back to the Orange Hills, and Staten Island lying before her, like a huge emerald gem upon the waters.

The villas of the wealthy stretched away upon either side of her, along the Bay Ridge shore, and far down the lower bay was visible the low, sandy point of Sandy Hook, with the Navesink Highlands to the right, standing out in bold relief against the sunlit skies.

But the eyes of the maiden seemed not to rest upon the lovely scenery about her, but rather upon a small schooner that was coming swiftly up the lower bay, rapidly making its way to the lead of a fleet of three-score sail that were heading for the city, and spreading on canvas to try and reach an anchorage, or wharf, before night came on.

Like a flock of scattered doves, heading for their cote, the vessels had entered the bay, some rounding Sandy Hook from the south, others coming down the Long Island shores, and still more from out upon the ocean, as from a land across the sea.

Among the fleet there were to be seen the stately Liverpool packet-ship (for I write of three-quarters of a century ago, dear reader), the merchant barque from Spain, the French brigantine, Cuban trader, and coasters from the north and south, with fishing-smacks and a pilot-boat.

The fleet had been bunched together in entering the harbor between Coney Island Point and Sandy Hook, and presented a beautiful picture, while, a spirit of rivalry pervading the heart of every skipper, sail had been spread on each craft to lead the fleet, and under a ten-knot breeze all sped swiftly along.

The last to enter the harbor was a schooner of two hundred tons, and so rakish-looking from hull to topmast, that the honest skippers of the fleet seemed anxious to give her ample sea-room.

A beautiful craft she certainly was, and it was noticed that her slender masts towered almost as high as those on a six hundred ton barque, as she passed her.

Her hull was long, with a bowsprit that ran far out over the razor-like bows, and almost as far over the lean stern went her main-boom, while the space between her masts was very great, giving her foresail great breadth.

Upon her decks were visible about a dozen men in ordinary sailor suits, and near the man at the wheel stood one who was evidently her captain, for his attire was better than that of hisseamen.

He held a glass in his hand, and turned it first upon one large vessel, then another, and never upon the smaller craft, while now and then he would seem to be gazing far up the harbor, or searching the Bay Ridge shore.

The vessel showed no armament, and yet looked the cruiser throughout, and it was a question among the various crews of the fleet whether she was a gentleman's pleasure craft, a new war-vessel for the Government, built in Baltimore, and coming to get her guns and crew in New York, or some West Indian trader.

She carried the Stars and Stripes at her peak, however, and was rapidly making her way toward the head of the fleet.

With main and foresails, jib and topsails set, she stood up well under the stiff breeze on her beam, and one by one picked up the vessels of the fleet, which a pilot-boat and a Baltimore clipper led, side by side, and struggling to be leader under all the canvas that would draw.

But in vain the struggle, for the strange schooner passed one after the other in such superb style, that the crews of the different vessels, with a sailor's love for a beautiful craft, would cheer her as she passed them, a compliment that her captain acknowledged gracefully by dipping his flag.

Sitting upon the piazza of the handsome villa on the Bay Ridge shore, the maiden referred to had noticed with interest the graceful schooner make her way from the rear through the fleet, and as she had left all but the pilot-boat and clipper behind, she arose and taking a glass from a shelf where it rested, turned it upon the strange craft.

"What a beautiful vessel!" she exclaimed, as she saw the schooner fairly flying through the waters, and creeping up closer and closer to the two leaders, and heading as though to go between them.

Holding on steadily until her sharp bowsprit was pointing directly between the clipper and the pilot-schooner, which were broadside and broadside, and about a hundred feet apart, the captain of the schooner, as though disdaining an advantage, waved his hand to his helmsman, the bows fell off quickly, in obedience, and the fleet craft took her way to leeward.

Blanketed for a while by the sails of the two vessels, especially the towering canvas of the large clipper, the schooner still wormed her way ahead, and pointing up sharp again, shot away, the leader of the fleet.

The cheers that burst from every crew of the fleet, at this triumph, reached the ears of the maiden, and she clapped her hands in glee, while she cried:

"Bravo, my gallant captain! Bravo! You deserve your triumph!" and she turned her glass upon the schooner with the remark:

"I'll try and get a look at your face, Sir Skipper, and I shall be terribly disappointed if you are not young and handsome."

"Ah! he is dipping his flag three times, to the cheers from the fleet, so I cannot see his face—yes, he turns now, and— Good Heaven!"

The glass fell from her hands and she turned to the hue of death, as she sat staring in a half-dazed way at the man on the schooner's deck.

CHAPTER II.

FAUSTINE'S SECRET.

THE one whose recognition of the captain of the strange schooner had so startled her, was a maiden of nineteen, and a daughter of the South, for she was the only child of a wealthy planter, dwelling upon the shores of Mobile Bay.

Her bearing was haughty and aristocratic, though her face, the perfection of beauty, indicated a loving nature and a generous heart.

Her form was slender but perfectly molded, and her every act was one of natural grace.

Born in the South, after the death of her mother, three years before the opening of this story, Faustine Fairfax had been brought North to dwell with her aunt, the planter's sister, and received her education in the great metropolis.

Her aunt's husband, Colonel Edgar Lennox, was an officer in the port commanding New York harbor, and his home was upon the shore of what is now Bay Ridge, and a handsome home it was, with its extensive grounds, running to the water's edge, and about it every indication that its master was a man of wealth and refinement.

To that home of Harbor View Faustine was wont to go to pass her holidays, while attending a fashionable boarding-school in the city, and having completed her education, she was remaining there until her father should come on in the autumn to take her home to his Southern plantation.

The fall was near at hand, and she was expecting her father daily, and, anticipating his arrival by sea, she was wont to watch for the arrival of the New Orleans packet-ships, which she knew well.

She was thus watching for the coming of the vessel, which she hoped would bear her father, when, that Saturday evening, she beheld the fleet homeward bound meet off the Hook, from three diverging points, and sail swiftly toward an anchorage near the city.

It was then that her eyes fell upon the strange schooner, and, trained from childhood to know the fine points of a vessel she quickly noted the beauty of the little craft and marveled at its wondrous speed.

"Redfield Romer! I believed you dead, or— worse; for it was said that you had allied yourself with West Indian outlaws."

"Oh! that you had proven the beau ideal of manhood that I pictured you, then all would have been well; but you were only the likeness, not the real, and I tore you from my heart, as one unworthy such a resting-place."

She spoke in a low, bitter tone, at times tinged with sadness, and looked down upon the flower-bed near the piazza, and not at the schooner, now directly in front of the mansion.

"All hands ahoy!"

"Stand by all to take in sail and anchor ship!"

Clear and ringing came the voice of the schooner's skipper, and as they reached the ears of Faustine Fairfax she started and again bent her gaze upon the schooner.

She saw that it was heading in nearer the shore, and her crew were lowering her topsails and getting ready to come to an anchor.

"Will he dare come here?" she asked herself, aloud.

"No! no! he would not presume to do that, reckless as he is, for he well knows that he is under sentence of death for his crime."

"Does he mean harm to his adopted parents, or does he come determined to see me?"

"Would that I knew, for I would thwart him in either intention."

"But he certainly has anchored in the cove,

and there is a deep purpose in all that Redfield Romer does."

As the maiden spoke she picked up the glass, and glad to see that it was not broken, turned it upon the schooner, which had now come to anchor, about a cable's length off the shore, and not a quarter of a mile distant from the mansion.

The clipper and pilot boat, still side by side, were now passing the craft at anchor, which had so outfooted them, and as they did so they dipped their colors in salute.

She saw the captain turn, speak to one of his men, and the flag of the schooner was dipped in return for the salute.

Still gazing intently at the vessel that seemed to fascinate her, though sheltered from view herself by a honeysuckle-entwined pillar of the piazza, Faustine Fairfax saw each one of the fleet salute the victor as it sailed by, while leaning over the bulwarks the skipper raised his cap at each salute, as the seaman dipped his flag.

It was a silent but striking tribute to the fleet craft from those defeated.

The twilight shadows began to gather before the fleet all got by, trooping along like specters over the waters, and Faustine was about to turn away, a deep sigh escaping her lips as she did so, when suddenly her eyes fell upon a stately vessel driving swiftly along in chase of the fleet, and which had rounded the Hook too far astern of the last loiterer to be before noticed.

Coming in on the first of the flood tide, and spread from deck to truck with canvas, she had rapidly crept up, until, when passing the mansion she was but a short distance away from the rear of the fleet.

"The Dauntless!" cried the maiden, with surprise and delight commingled, while she added, quickly:

"Heaven grant my father is on board; but it is too dark now to see— Ah! she hails the schooner as she passes!" and a deep voice rung out, bluntly:

"Ho! that schooner!"

"Ahoy! the clipper!"

The answer came back in the manly voice that Faustine knew well.

"What schooner is that?" came from the clipper.

"The Bother!"

"She's rightly named, for she has bothered us all the way from the Gulf."

This much Faustine heard, wafted to her distinctly by the wind, and then the clipper dashed on up the harbor, leaving the strange schooner silently rocking upon the waves.

Darkness came over the scene, shutting out the land and water from the view of Faustine Fairfax, who still remained upon the piazza, her mind evidently filled with painful thoughts.

The glimmer of a lantern here and there showed where a vessel was at anchor, while across on the Staten Island shore a number of lights grouped together showed where a village lay.

For a long time did Faustine Fairfax remain upon the piazza, and it was a couple of hours after nightfall, when she turned to go into the mansion, having told a servant who had called her to tea, that he would wait for the coming of her uncle and aunt, who were in the city.

But upon the threshold she stopped, for she heard the rumble of wheels along the country highway, that led by the half-farms, half-country seats of the dwellers upon the Bay Ridge shore.

"It is uncle and aunt returning," she said, as she heard the carriage turn into the Harbor View gateway.

A few moments more and the vehicle drew up at the door, a gentleman sprung out, and she was grasped in the arms of a tall, handsome man of fifty.

"Father!" she cried in a joyful voice, as she threw her arms about his neck.

"Yes, Faustine, my dear child, I am here again, after one long year of absence from you, and I have come to take you home with me," he answered, and dismissing the hired vehicle, which had brought him from the city, it drove away just as the Lennox carriage rolled up to the door.

It contained Colonel Lennox and his wife, and a warm welcome was extended to the planter, and then all repaired to the supper-room, when Faustine said:

"Had the Dauntless been in half an hour sooner, I could have recognized you on her deck, but it was too late to see faces, though I knew her well, and heard Captain Hudson hail the schooner."

"Ah, yes, and it is of that schooner that I wish to tell you, for she is a most remarkable craft," said Mr. Fairfax.

"She is a fleet sailer, for I saw her pass the entire fleet, as they came up the bay," Faustine quietly rejoined.

"She sails like the wind itself, and we sighted her just as we came out of the Balize."

"It was then sunset, and when morning broke she was far ahead of us; but we passed her during the day, but in the morning she was again leading."

"We had a terrible storm of two days, but that craft did not vary her style of behavior, passing us by night, and yet keeping too far off for us to see her, and by day allowing the Dauntless to go by her."

"Captain Hudson said at first that he was afraid she was a pirate, but the closest observation failed to find any guns on board, or to see more than a dozen men at a time."

"Her proceedings were certainly strange, Duncan," said Colonel Lennox, who was a fine-looking soldier of fifty.

"Yes, and somehow she worried Captain Hudson and the crew, as I could plainly see."

"And she is in port now, Faustine, you say?" asked Mrs. Lennox, a handsome woman of forty, and the sister of the planter.

"Yes, Aunt Amelie, I saw her run up the harbor and anchor," quietly said the maiden.

"Yes, she is anchored not far from you shore, Edgar."

"She was dead ahead at dawn this morning, but, contrary to her usual conduct, did not let us pass, but held her own, in spite of all we did to catch her, and ran around Sandy Hook some hour and a half ahead of us."

"And you say Captain Hudson hailed her, Faustine?"

"Yes, Uncle Edgar, I heard him hail, and he seemed in no good humor."

"Yes, he was cross, and asked the name of the schooner, the reply being that it was the Bother."

"We then swept on up to an anchorage, and landing I drove here, while Hudson says he intends to report the craft as a suspicious vessel."

"He may be up to some mischief, it is true, and he may be some skipper with a fleet vessel, fond of appearing mysterious, but don't let her presence near alarm you and Faustine, wife," said Colonel Lennox.

"I am not in the least alarmed," laughed Mrs. Lennox, while Faustine said to herself:

"Oh! if they but knew who is that schooner's captain, it would cause their hearts to ache."

"By the way, Edgar, what has become of your adopted son, young Romer?" suddenly asked Mr. Fairfax.

The colonel started, and Mrs. Lennox turned pale, while Faustine arose and walked over toward the window.

The planter saw that something was wrong, and said quickly:

"I hope that nothing has befallen him, and that my question gives no pain."

"I wish that I could say otherwise, Duncan, but I cannot, for Redfield Romer has turned out very badly."

"I asked Faustine not to write you regarding him, as when you met him three years ago, as a cadet, you took such a fancy to him."

"But he became wild, began to gamble, and a year ago got involved in a duel with a gambler in Boston and killed him."

"He at once fled to escape punishment, and was outlawed by the Secretary of the Navy, and since then we have heard that he was killed in Cuba, and again that he had become a pirate; but what has become of him, Heaven only knows, and we hope never to hear of him again, dearly as we once loved him, for, though he was only an adopted son, we regarded him as though he was in reality our flesh and blood."

"It pains me to hear this story of Cadet Romer, for I thought most highly of him indeed—Ha!"

A cry from Faustine broke in upon her father's words, and staggering back from the window she would have fallen had not Colonel Lennox caught her in his arms.

"She has fainted! Bring restoratives, wife!" he said quickly, as he bore her to a sofa.

"What could have caused her swoon?" anxiously asked the planter, bending over her.

"Alas! she had learned to love that faithless scamp, Romer, and speaking of him caused her emotion; but she is recovering," said the colonel.

And a moment after Faustine half arose, glanced about her quickly, then gave a sigh of relief, and with an effort at self-control said:

"How foolish I was to frighten you, papa, and you, auntie and uncle, as I did, and all for nothing."

They asked her for no reason, for they felt that they knew her secret, and soon after she bade them good-night and went to her room, though not to sleep, for, seated at the open window, she gazed out upon the scene of land and water lighted up by the waning moon just rising above the tree-tops and silvery all with beauty.

"Yes, it was his face, his form, for I saw him distinctly as the light from the library shone out distinctly upon him there on the piazza."

"Oh, what can he mean by coming here?"

And she buried her face in her hands, to start suddenly as a low voice uttered her name:

"Faustine!"

CHAPTER III.

THE LOVER'S THREAT.

THE man who had guided the destinies of the schooner that so gallantly passed through the ingoing fleet was one to attract attention anywhere.

His form was elegant, and his every movement and pose one of grace that was by no means studied.

Tall, with massive shoulders, slender waist, firm, sinewy limbs and small feet and hands, he seemed the model of an athlete, while his *negligé* style of dress was most becoming to him, where in another it would have seemed bad taste.

He wore white duck pants, low pumps, a blue jacket trimmed with brass buttons, on which was an anchor and nothing else, a tarpaulin with a gilt cord about it, and a red sash about his waist instead of a belt.

If he was armed, no weapon was visible upon him, and had the careless, quiet manner of one who had perfect confidence in himself.

His face was a study, so full was it of good and bad commingled.

A fearless, resolute face, stern withal, and yet with utter recklessness stamped upon it, with also the look of one whom it would be dangerous to arouse to deep anger or resentment.

His eyes were black, his hair brown and waving, and certainly he was a very handsome man, capable of throwing into his countenance any emotion he wished, from love to hatred.

His voice was as clear as a bugle, and rung out like one in issuing an order, while his lower tones were most musical, and really pathetic in their softness.

Such was the man the recognition of whom had so startled Faustine Fairfax.

The two had met under strange circumstances, for though the adopted son of Colonel Lennox, he had been at sea with his ship, as a cadet, the year she had been North at boarding school.

Going home with a school friend, who lived in Boston, to spend a few weeks, Faustine had been returning in a fine passenger schooner, on which a mutiny had occurred, from the fact that on board the vessel quite a large sum of money was being carried to New York, which several of the crew knew of and were determined to have.

It was the night following the departure from Boston, and Faustine had met none of the half-dozen passengers on board, two of whom were ladies.

At a late hour she was on deck, talking with the captain, while the mate and the three gentlemen passengers were playing cards in the cabin.

Suddenly the crew came aft; there was a shot and the captain sunk to the deck, while Faustine stood paralyzed with fear.

Out of the cabin dashed the mate, to fall to the deck, wounded, and the mutineers held the vessel, and were going into the captain's stateroom to divide the treasure, when suddenly they were confronted by one whose first act was to fire and drop the ringleader in his tracks.

Then he sprang forward, with a cutlass in his right hand, and his voice thundered forth:

"To your posts, you mutineer dogs, or I will string up the man who hesitates!"

With their ringleader dead, and confronted by an armed man who fearlessly faced them, while the wounded mate and the other passengers now came to the stranger's aid, the mutineers fled in dismay to the fore-castle, and the trouble was at an end.

But the poor captain was dead, and the mate too badly wounded to take command of the ship, so the gallant stranger said:

"I am a cadet in the navy, sir, and will take your vessel into port for you."

The wounded mate gladly accepted his offer, and a storm that had been threatening, soon after burst upon the schooner, and the crew sprang to their posts with a will, anxious to retrieve the past and fully convinced that the one who commanded them was a thorough sailor as well as fearless man.

Faustine had seen all that had occurred, and the conduct of the brave young sailor had won her greatest admiration and her gratitude alike.

As the storm broke she still remained on deck, and noting it, for he had not been unmindful of the beautiful girl, he politely raised his hat and said:

"Pardon me, miss, if I say you will find it pleasant below in this storm, and you need feel no anxiety as to those mutineer dogs, for they are cowed."

"I do not feel anxiety now, sir; but I prefer to remain on deck, for I am accustomed to the sea."

"But permit me to offer my gratitude for your courageous conduct that saved the vessel from those wicked men, and my uncle, Colonel Edgar Lennox, will also be glad to offer his thanks when we reach the city."

She saw a smile flash over his face, as he stood where the cabin light fell upon him, and he asked, quickly:

"Is Colonel Edgar Lennox your uncle, miss?"

"He is, sir."

"Then we are cousins, at least in name, for I am his adopted son, Redfield Romer, very much at your service, Miss Faustine Fairfax, for you can be no other, from all I have heard of that young lady's beauty."

"Do not flatter, Cadet Romer, or we will

never be friends, but I am glad indeed to meet you, and what a delightful surprise it will be to your parents, for you were not expected home for six months yet."

"I was in luck, for I was sent home by the admiral with dispatches, and landed only this morning in Boston."

Thus the two met, and from that meeting Redfield Romer became completely infatuated with the lovely girl, while she, having in her mind and heart an ideal of manhood, felt that she had met that beau ideal in the young sailor.

Stationed at New York, after his return, Cadet Romer entered upon a dissipated life, and before long gambled most recklessly, the sweet image of Faustine not restraining him from the vices he indulged in.

Thus it went on until she broke the engagement that bound them, and soon after his adopted father, who had generously paid his gambling debts, refused to pay any more and forbade him to come to Harbor View again.

A short while more and, a murderer, Redfield Romer became a fugitive, going no one knew where, and from that day his name had not been mentioned in the house of Harbor View, until spoken by Mr. Fairfax, when he asked regarding him.

Knowing who the commander of the strange schooner was the reader can now understand why Faustine was so deeply moved when she recognized him on her decks, and again, when, standing by the library window, she beheld him suddenly appear in the light that streamed out upon the piazza.

When, seated in her room gazing out upon the moonlight, she suddenly heard her name spoken, she knew well that Redfield Romer stood before her.

She raised her head from her hands and beheld him standing upon the piazza and gazing into her open window, which extended to the floor, serving the purpose of a door as well.

"Have you no welcome for me, Faustine?" he asked, bending toward her.

"You are not welcome, Mr. Romer," was the low reply.

"You did not greet me thus, a year ago, Miss Fairfax!" he said with a sneer.

"You were then a man of honor, sir, and I respected you, but now you are a fugitive from the gallows, and I detest you."

"Ah! this is the way you talk, is it, fair Faustine?"

"Well, I am what I am; but I came here to talk with you, for I have a confession to make to you, so I beg of you to walk with me to the arbor yonder."

"No, say what you have to say, standing there where you are."

"I am in peril of my life here, for did my father, or rather Colonel Lennox, for he is no father of mine, know I was here, he would hand me over to the hangman."

"My father is also here, sir, and to-night, not knowing of your dishonor, asked most kindly regarding you, it being the first time your name has been spoken in Harbor View for a year."

"I am to be forgotten then? So be it," and his face wore a bitter look, while he added, after an instant:

"Yes, I know that your father came this afternoon, for I saw him go on board the Dauntless in New Orleans."

"And your motive in coming here, sir?"

"To see you."

"Having accomplished the purpose of your errand, kindly do me the favor to depart."

"I said that I had a confession to make to you."

"Yes."

"Will you come and hear it?"

"I will listen here to what you have to say."

"No, I am in danger here, and I beg you to come, for what I would say, Faustine, is important to you, to me, to all of us."

"I wish that you would speak here."

"You fear to trust me?"

"Frankly, I do."

"Faustine, once I told you that I loved you, and you gave me the assurance that my love was not hopeless."

"You pledged yourself to one day be my wife, and my act alone has divided us, my evil deeds alone have sent me from your presence, and I have only myself to blame for my present career."

"But I have not ceased to love you - nay, I love you more tenderly than ever before, now that I know that I have lost you forever."

"But, Faustine, loving you, would I harm you?"

"Come with me and hear what I have to say, and then I will go from you, never to return."

"Come, Faustine!"

His voice had dropped to its lowest tone, and was full of melody and pathos.

She was deeply moved, it was evident, and yet she felt that it was not returning love that she felt for him.

"I will go. Wait until I get a wrap to throw about me," she said, after an instant's hesitation.

He stood by the window a moment; then she stepped out upon the piazza.

He offered his hand, but she refused it, and

they walked side by side to a little arbor a couple of hundred feet away.

"Now, sir, what have you to say?" she asked, coldly.

"I ask you to go with me, Faustine, to share my fortunes, be they what they may, to be my wife, for I know that in your heart you love me as I do you.

"Come, be my wife, Faustine."

She drew herself proudly up, and her eyes fairly blazed in the moonlight, while she said, almost fiercely:

"Marry you! you a profligate, a gambler, a murderer?"

"You insult me, Redfield Romer, and I command you to leave me!"

He shrunk back at her bitter words; but only for an instant, for he cried:

"No, my beauty, I will not leave you, for you go with me, and *you shall be my wife!*" was his threat.

As he spoke, he gave a low whistle, and throwing one arm about her waist, attempted to smother her cry by placing his hand over her mouth.

She threw off his hand and said fiercely:

"Release me, sir!"

"Never! you go with me, Faustine!"

She heard the sound of rapidly-approaching feet, up the path from the shore, and from her lips broke the words:

"God forgive me!"

There followed a smothered report of a pistol, and, with a savage oath, Redfield Romer staggered back, while she, gathering her skirts about her, ran like a deer toward the mansion.

She had just regained her room when she heard her uncle up and calling to the servants.

Opening her door she called out:

"I fired the shot, uncle, at a man in the grounds; he was by the arbor on the bluff."

She spoke with perfect calmness, and awaited by her window, while her uncle and father went out in the grounds, followed by several servants.

After a quarter of an hour that seemed an age to her, they returned, Colonel Lennox saying with a laugh:

"Well, Faustine, it was doubtless some one from the strange schooner, viewing the grounds by moonlight, and you frightened him so badly that the vessel has gotten up her anchor and gone to sea."

"Perhaps, sir, the crew might have attempted to rob Harbor View mansion, and my shot alarmed them."

"Such was my idea, uncle."

"Egad, you may be right, my child," said her father.

"Yes, and I half-believe now you are," Colonel Lennox remarked, and he led the way back to look after the schooner, which was now flying down toward the Narrows under full sail.

"Oh! Heaven grant I have not taken his life!" "No! no! no! it will not be that I will have to bear a cross so heavy through life; but, evil as Redfield Romer is, I cannot give greater pain to those who I know still love him, by telling of this last act of his," and Faustine closed her window and retired, though in vain was it that she tried to sleep, and dawn was stealing through the blinds, when slumber closed her eyelids.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRIDE OF THE SEA.

SOME two months after the scene related in the last chapter, a pretty brig was sailing swiftly along over the blue waters of the Gulf.

She was crowded from deck to truck with every stitch of canvas that could be made to draw a capful of wind, and was making ten knots out of an ordinary six-knot breeze.

She was a beautiful craft, looking in hull and rig like a vessel-of-war, though she carried but three small guns, and a crew of twenty men.

The Stars and Stripes floated at her peak, and upon her graceful stern, in gilt letters was the following:

"GULF QUEEN,

of

NEW ORLEANS AND NEW YORK."

The fact was that she was one of the fleet packet line that plied between the cities of New York and New Orleans, seventy-five years ago.

Upon her deck were a dozen passengers, among them being two whom the reader will recognize as Duncan Fairfax the planter, and his lovely daughter Faustine, *en route* to their home on the shores of Mobile Bay.

Though the speed of the Gulf Queen was such as to win admiration from all, no one on the decks, from her handsome young captain down to the cabin-boy, seemed to be happy.

A glance a mile astern showed the cause, for there came a vessel, and evidently in chase of the brig, while, what was worse, she was gaining.

The strange craft was a schooner, and she had hung in the wake of the Gulf Queen since leaving Sandy Hook.

In pleasant weather and in foul the brig had been unable to shake off the smaller craft,

though she had held her own up to a few hours before, keeping just a league between them.

Mr. Fairfax had recognized the schooner at a glance, as the one that had dogged the Dauntless so persistently two months before in the run to New York, and had so reported to the young captain of the packet, who had said:

"Well, Mr. Fairfax, fast as is the Dauntless, we can outsail her, and I have no fear of the schooner catching us should he mean evil."

And Faustine Fairfax, with her well-trained eye, had known the schooner at the first glance, and her face paled when she knew who had been her commander.

Since that night, when she fired to save herself from being kidnapped, she had heard no word of Redfield Romer.

Whether dead or alive, and if the former, by her hand, she knew not, and it preyed deeply upon her heart and brain.

But she sacredly kept her secret, and now, here in the wake of the Gulf Queen, came the schooner, and rapidly did it gain, to the amazement of all who knew the brig's speed.

"She is armed now, and has a number of men on board."

"Can she be a pirate?" murmured Faustine, as the schooner drew nearer, and seeing her anxious look, Captain Roy Benton said sadly:

"I am doing all in my power, Miss Fairfax."

"I know it well, Captain Benton; but the speed of that schooner is something marvelous."

"Will you surrender if he demands it?"

"I shall fight to the last, Miss Fairfax, if, as I believe, he is a pirate."

As the young captain spoke a shot came from the bows of the schooner, and flew over the brig.

Still she held on.

A second shot cut away the mizzen topmast, showing that the schooner's commander was in earnest.

"Below, all passengers! Stand by, men, to fight ship as best we can!" cried Roy Benton.

But the crew did not move, while one called out:

"Captain, we hain't no cowards, sir; but that schooner is heavily armed and carries sixty men, so it is useless to ask us to die for nothing."

In vain did the gallant commander entreat them; urge and swear, they would not move, and, as the firing from the schooner was now becoming hot and fast, he was compelled to lay to and await the coming of his captor.

Standing on deck, a glass at her eye, Faustine suddenly beheld the tall form of her outlaw lover, and fervently came from her lips the words:

"Thank God, he did not die by my hand."

"My child, it is booty that fellow is after, so be not alarmed," said the planter, encouragingly.

And all eyes were now upon the schooner, which, a few moments after, shortened sail and glided alongside of the brig.

Cutlass in hand Redfield Romer sprung on deck, followed by half a hundred men.

"Captain Benton, you have in your state-room, beneath a secret trap in the floor, a treasure-box containing some fifty thousand dollars in gold," he said with a smile.

"In Heaven's name how did you know this?" cried the surprised merchant captain.

"It matters not how, sir; but I will not rob you of your golden charge, though I will of the care of that young lady, who must accompany me on board my schooner."

"When my prize is secure, sir, you can go on your way."

"Ho, men! gather around me!" and stepping toward Faustine, he raised his hat with mock courtesy, and said:

"Come, my fair lady, you go with me."

She shrunk from him with a cry of horror, while her father sprung toward him with indignant rage.

But the well-trained crew threw the planter back, and seizing Faustine in his arms, the daring cadet outlaw sprung upon the bulwark of the brig and leaped to the deck of his own vessel.

Roy Benton had also sprung to her rescue, calling upon his men to aid him; but he, too, was hurled back, and then came the ringing command:

"Cast loose the grappels, and swing off from the brig."

The crew obeyed as one man, and, amid the cries and curses that followed him from the decks of the Gulf Queen the bold kidnapper's vessel sped away in the gathering twilight, leaving the brig rocking upon the waves, a scene of wild confusion and dismay.

Not once had Faustine lost her presence of mind, and, as Romer placed her upon the schooner's deck, though with a circle of men about her, she gazed upon him with flashing eyes, though her face was livid.

As the swift schooner sped away over the darkening waters, Redfield Romer came aft, motioned the men forward, and said abruptly:

"Faustine, I told you that you should be my wife, and I meant it."

"You are in my power, and I ask you do you now consent to be my bride?"

"No, a thousand times no!" was the decisive reply.

"Then by Heaven you shall be the bride of the sea, for I shall hurl you into its depths to die!" and seizing her in his arms, the baffled pirate, springing upon the bulwark near the mizzen ratlines, held her poised over the hissing waters.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRIDE OF THE WIND.

"THE BOTHER," as Captain Romer had called his vessel, had undergone a change since she was seen in New York Bay, gliding to the head of the merchant fleet, in the run for an anchorage.

Then a dozen men had been visible upon her decks, and she had been disarmed; but when she overhauled the Gulf Queen, in such gallant style, she was armed and well-manned.

Her guns were eight in number, two twelves and one eighteen-pounder amidships, to a broadside, and a thirty-two pivot mounted upon the forecabin, and another upon the stern.

Her crew numbered sixty men, and one peculiarity about them was that there was no officer to act as lieutenant, only boatswain, quartermasters and coxswains, Captain Romer being next in command, and leaving the deck, when he was not in charge, to one of the under-officers.

His men wondered at this strange freak of their commander, but wisely held their peace, for he was not one to brook interference, his word was law, and, devoting himself to the comfort of his crew, and their interests, he allowed no one to offer advice to him, and kept each man under iron rule.

When he boarded the Gulf Queen the crew had behaved like machinery, and when he held Faustine over the foaming waters, as the schooner flew along, not one dared utter a word in her behalf.

Whether they suspected that he meant to carry out his diabolical threat, or not, it is not known, but, certain it is, not one of them moved to save her from her awful fate.

An instant he held her there, glaring with a look of frenzy into her eyes; yet she did not cower before his gaze—did not offer one word of entreaty.

She was calm and utterly fearless it seemed, as though she did not dread his words, or had nerved herself to hear the worst.

For an instant the desperate man held Faustine over the ocean, as though to make her feel the full horror of her situation, and force her to cry for mercy.

Then, as though he had made up his mind to hurl her into the sea, or to place her back upon the deck, he moved his position slightly, and the crew looked on in terror, though in silence.

Suddenly there came a deep boom, a whizzing sound, a crash, groans and cries, and a shot tore through the bulwarks, killing one man and wounding several others.

It was so unexpected, like a stroke of lightning from a clear sky, that a shout of terror arose from many a brave man on the schooner's deck, and it caused Captain Romer to spring from the bulwark still grasping Faustine in his arms.

Darting into the cabin with her, he left her there, closed the companionway, and loud rung his orders to his men, for a glance showed him his danger.

It was not, as he had, withal, at first supposed, a shot from the brig, rendered desperate by the danger of the maiden; but it came from a schooner-of-war, sixty tons heavier than was the Bother, and coming on under a press of sail directly toward him.

In one of those mists often seen upon the waters in lower latitudes, when near the shore, a strange vessel had been concealed, and, unnoticed by those on the brig, or the schooner, she had come down with the fog, which had lifted, revealing her within a few cables'-length of the Gulf Queen, when the cadet outlaw had stood away with his kidnapped prize.

Maddened with grief at the loss of his daughter, the planter had urged, and implored the men on the brig to stand on in chase; but, though Captain Benton was willing, his crew and the male passengers saw the utter folly of it.

"I will give my fortune to you, men, if you will do your duty in this matter and try to save my child," cried Duncan Fairfax.

But, not a man moved, and overcome with emotion the planter turned away hissing forth the word:

"Cowards!"

As he did so his eyes fell upon a dark object upon the waters, dimly seen, then the rigging of a vessel was revealed, as the fog lifted, and he cried joyously:

"A vessel! a vessel! now my child will be saved."

"Quick, men! place me on board yonder craft and her crew will be men enough to go after yonder pirate, flying away with my daughter."

Captain Benton had turned his glass upon the stranger, and said eagerly:

"It is a schooner-of-war, and from her rig, an American."

"Lower away a boat there, and place Mr. Fairfax on board."

The men quickly obeyed, and a minute after the planter was rowing rapidly toward the strange craft.

The firing had put her on her guard, for the guns were run out, the men at quarters, and she was heading toward the brig.

"Ho, the schooner!" shouted the planter as he drew near.

"Ay, ay, sir," came in a manly voice from the schooner.

"I come from yonder brig, which is a merchant packet from New York, for New Orleans. We were boarded by a pirate and my daughter was carried off. There goes the fellow now, a mile away to windward."

"Ay, ay, sir, I see her; but do you wish to come on board?"

"Yes, sir, and to ask you for the love of God to rescue my child."

"I will do so, sir, and in a very short while," was the confident reply.

Then came the order:

"Stand by the gangway, there, to help that gentleman on board."

The next instant Duncan Fairfax was upon the deck of the strange vessel, and the boat started back for the schooner, while quickly came the order:

"Hold her on her course again, helmsman, and yonder schooner is our game."

"All hands to crowd on sail!"

Then the commander turned to the planter and said:

"Now, sir, permit me to offer you welcome on board my vessel, and to say that you have my deepest sympathy in your affliction."

"You are very kind, sir, and I appreciate it; but may I ask if this is an American vessel?"

"Yes, sir, the American schooner *Bride of the Wind*, and I am her commander, Fred Le Roy at your service, sir."

"My name, sir, is Duncan Fairfax. I am a planter on the shores of Mobile Bay, and was bringing my daughter home from New York, when that pirate overhauled us; but, Captain Le Roy, the scamp has the fastest craft I ever saw, and I fear you can never overhail him," and the planter seemed very anxious.

"You have not seen the *Bride of the Wind* sail yet, Mr. Fairfax," was the pleasant reply, and, as the schooner was now passing the Gulf Queen, he hailed with:

"Ho! the Gulf Queen!"

"Aho! the schooner-of-war!" answered Benton.

"You can stand on your course, and after I overhail yonder pirate I will catch you and return your passengers."

"He speaks with too much confidence," muttered Roy Benton, but aloud he called out:

"Ay, ay, sir, and God's best luck to you."

The brig had hitherto concealed the *Bother* from those on the *Bride of the Wind*, but the moment the vessel-of-war shot out into full view of the fugitive craft, Captain Le Roy called out:

"At that fore-castle pivot-gun, there!"

"Ay, ay, sir," came from the officer in charge.

"Send a shot at yonder schooner, and aim high!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

The next instant the heavy gun belched forth the shot that had so startled Romer and his crew.

"Well done, Brace; you hit her forward."

"Try again, and cut off her topmasts."

"But, sir, my poor child is on board of her, if that wretch has not hurled her into the sea," cried the planter.

"True, sir, I had forgotten that I was endangering her life."

"Cease firing, and we will run him down!" cried Captain Le Roy.

And he gave orders to set every stitch of canvas that could draw upon the schooner, saying with his usual confident manner and a smile:

"We will catch her, within three hours, Mr. Fairfax, for this is the *Bride of the Wind*, you know."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHASE.

CAPTAIN BENTON, as he saw the schooner-of-war dart away in chase of the *Bother*, said to the helmsman of the brig near whom he stood:

"That craft fairly flies, and, if the pirate can be caught, she can do it; but I don't know the schooner, Williams, do you?"

"No, sir; I hain't seen her afore, as I remembers; but she must be that new pirate-hunter the Government was to send to these waters."

"Ah, yes; I heard that there was to be a Pirate Patrol established in the Gulf and along the Atlantic coast to protect our merchant craft, and a swift schooner was to be sent to these waters particularly, and that must be the one."

"Well, she is a goer, Williams."

"No mistake, sir, and I hope she will catch the pirate and hang him."

"God grant it, for much is at stake on her speed, for I would not have harm befall that lovely girl for my life."

And the last part of his sentence the young captain uttered half-aloud, for he had become deeply in love with his fair passenger, and, had his crew stood by him, would have risked the desperate odds in a fight to save her.

The schooner-of-war was meanwhile lying well over and bounding along like a deer in chase of the fugitive craft.

She was a vessel of beautiful proportions, as could now be seen by the rising of the full moon that illumined the sea, and she cut through the waters like a knife.

Her hull was very narrow, lay deep in the water, and was sharp and lean forward, while her stern was of the swallow-tail pattern common among the fishing craft of the Maine coast some years ago.

She was painted black, which was in bright contrast to her snowy sails, and her spars were polished like mahogany.

About two hundred tons, she carried a heavy battery, with the peculiarity that they were all pivots, and seven in number, mounted along the center from fore-castle to stern.

The three pivots amidships were smooth-bore twelve-pounders, with the next gun fore and aft a rifled twenty-four, while the fore-castle and stern guns were thirty-twos.

Her crew numbered ninety men, and, in their white duck trousers, blue blouse shirts and red skull-caps presented a picturesque look.

The schooner's masts were single sticks, running far aloft, and she spread a vast amount of sail for her size, while she could set extra canvas seldom seen in those early days, but of a great deal of assistance when before the wind and with the wind abeam.

There were three officers visible upon deck, besides her captain, and they were all young men, their uniform being white pants, blue jackets and naval caps.

Captain Le Roy was a man of twenty-eight, with a handsome face, dark-blue eyes, light hair, and a long mustache of golden hue.

His bearing was that of a military man, and his manners were gentle and winning.

The crew stood at their guns, as the schooner sped on, while Captain Le Roy paced to and fro, now and then stopping to glance at the chase.

"You see we gain, sir," he said, after a few minutes.

It was true; the *Bride of the Wind* was surely creeping up on the *Bother*, and the planter cried, excitedly:

"By Heaven, sir! but you are right. This is marvelous, for yonder vessel is a phenomenon for sailing."

"So is the *Bride of the Wind*, sir, as you shall see," was the smiling reply.

"They are preparing to fire on us, sir," announced an officer, politely, handing his glass to his captain.

"You are right, Brigham, and we cannot hit back; but we will have to do so, if we see he is going to injure us."

"Ah! there come his iron compliments," and the smile never left the young captain's face, as the iron shot, from the stern pivot of the *Bother*, came flying over his head.

"He is changing his course, captain, throwing the wind abeam, as he sees you are gaining in windward work," said Mr. Fairfax.

"This schooner is a wonderful boat in windward work, Mr. Fairfax, and can point her bowsprit right into the eye of the wind; but, with a good breeze abeam, and with it astern, I can spread extra canvas, which I have never seen but one other vessel carry in these waters, and my word for it, we will soon make him go back to windward work again."

As the *Bother* had suddenly fallen off, so as to get the wind abeam, the *Bride of the Wind*'s course was also altered, and both vessels went swiftly along over the moonlit waters.

"We are gaining as it is; but, Mr. Brigham, set our extra canvas, and show that fellow that we are in earnest."

The extra canvas was spread quickly, and the schooner fairly jumped through the waters, overhauling the *Bother* rapidly.

Seeing this Romer opened fire again on his pursuer, the shots flying thick and fast about her, but doing no material damage.

At last a shot cut through forward and killed a seaman.

"That hangs him," sternly said Captain Le Roy, and the planter was surprised to see how dark and threatening the young commander could look when his anger was aroused.

"There! he goes back to windward work, as you said he would," cried the planter, as the *Bother* again hauled in her sheets flat and began to work into the wind once more.

"Yes, and I suppose he wishes he was in a position where he could run before the wind; but if he did, we could show him what the *Bride* could do at that style of sailing."

The *Bride of the Wind*, changing as did the

Bother, was now again working to windward, having taken in her extra sails.

As the wind was now blowing pretty fresh, the topsails were lowered, and the schooner seemed to add to her speed, though the *Bother* still kept up every inch of canvas she could spread to add to her headway.

Seeing that his pursuer was still gaining, and steadily and surely, Captain Romer kept up a constant fire from his stern pivot, though with little effect.

"There rises a friend to help us," he said gladly, as he saw a storm sweeping over the sea, though still a long way off.

"Fire rapidly there at that gun, and aim better, for you have done no damage to him yet," he cried angrily to the gunner, who was however doing his best as a marksman, for it was no easy matter to hit the pursuer with the wind blowing half a gale, the *Bother* lurching wildly under her spread of sail, and the waves causing her to pitch terribly at times.

"Curse the craft! she sails like the very wind," cried Redfield Romer, a short while after as he noticed that she was creeping nearer and nearer upon him.

"I did not believe the craft floated that could catch this schooner," he said fiercely, and in this his crew concurred, for never before that had they seen a vessel that the *Bother* could not play with.

And so on they went, the pursuer and pursued, the wind steadily increasing in strength, the *Bride of the Wind* surely creeping up, and the storm coming down from windward with threatening force.

"This won't do," muttered Romer, as he saw that the schooner would be near him before the storm broke.

"Once he gets near me, and he will keep there until the storm is over."

"I must either give up *Faustine*, causing him to lay to, to pick her up, or I must risk a fight with him and that would seem like madness."

"No, I must give her up, and, as she goes to her plantation home, I can easily regain possession of her again."

"Coxswain!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Order the life-skiff gotten ready to launch, and it must be done while we are under way."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"I want no crew for her, coxswain."

"No crew, sir?" was the surprised response.

"No, for she will carry a fair passenger," and with a grim smile the outlawed cadet entered the cabin.

He found *Faustine* looking out of the stern lights at the schooner coming astern, and her face was no longer pale but flushed with hope, for she saw that the pursuer was gaining.

She paled as he entered, however, and turned toward him.

"*Faustine*," he said softly.

"Well, sir?" and her manner was defiant.

"I have to-day twice met more than my match, for you defied me, in the very moment of death, for I meant to let the sea claim you as its bride, and yonder craft, which you have been watching astern, overhauls my little schooner in a manner I cannot comprehend."

"Well, sir?" she again said, coldly.

"It is not my desire, upon second thought, to take your life now, though I swear to you that you shall never be the wife of any other man."

"I love you: above all things on earth, I love you, and if I wish to gain you, and use harsh means to do so, it is because I cannot bear the thought of losing you."

"But, once more, I ask you to become my wife!"

"When you held me over the sea, threatening to hurl me into it, Redfield Romer, I felt then that it would be a happy fate there to die rather than live to become your wife!"

She spoke with a scorn that was intense, and a curse arose to his lips at her words; but he said:

"Well, you shall be my wife some day, or you shall die by my hands."

"You mark my words, *Faustine* Fairfax, for this is no idle threat; but now I intend to let you go free."

"Thank God!"

"I shall restore you to your father through the one who commands yonder vessel, so come with me on deck."

"Ah! you see that you are to be caught, and you intend to gain time by having that schooner lay to, to pick me up."

"You use me as a means to secure your own safety," she said, with a sneer.

He winced under the shot, but said, fiercely:

"I will give you up to yonder commander now, but there shall come a day of reckoning for him, for I will never be thwarted, either in hate or revenge."

Fearlessly she laughed lightly, and he seemed tempted to spring upon her in his fury, his hand resting upon a knife-hilt in his sash; but he checked the impulse and said, sternly:

"Come with me to the deck."

She silently obeyed.

The life-skiff was upon the lee side, with the men ready to launch it into the sea, and he led her toward it.

"Get a red lantern, quick!"

His order was obeyed.

"Make it fast on a stump mast in this boat!"

This order was quickly obeyed.

"Now, Faustine, step into this skiff, and go back to those who seek you."

She got into the life-skiff in silence, seated herself carefully, with the manner of one who knew her danger thoroughly and how to guard against it as much as was in her power, and then the boat was raised and launched upon the waters.

As it dashed wildly about upon the waves the outlawed cadet shouted:

"Remember, Faustine, that, though I free you now, I will not be thwarted in my purpose and there shall come a day of reckoning for my enemies."

CHAPTER VII.

LOST IN THE STORM.

THE *Bride of the Wind* was not near enough to see what was going on upon the decks of the chase, so the launching of the life-boat with Faustine in it was not observed.

"That storm I fear will foil us, Captain Le Roy," said the planter anxiously.

"You mean by shutting us out from a view of the pirate and thus enabling him to escape?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir; for he can dodge us in the darkness and storm."

"I will get as near as possible to him before it breaks, and then set every man on the vessel who is not needed for working the schooner to watching the chase, so that he cannot escape us," was the answer.

"Light, ho!"

The cry came from aloft, and in answer to the captain's questions as to its locality the lookout replied:

"Just to leeward of the wake of the chase, sir."

"Do you see a vessel?"

"No, sir."

"Then what is the light on?"

"It lies low in the water, sir, as though on a boat."

"Ay, ay, I see it; and it is a boat," said Captain Le Roy, turning his glass upon the object.

"What do you make it out, sir?" asked Mr. Fairfax.

"It is a boat, I think, but lies too low in the water for me distinctly to see."

"It has a red light, and dances about wildly upon the rough waters."

"I think it must be a trick of the pirate, sir, to make us lay to to pick it up and thus enable him to gain time," said a young officer.

"I think you are right, Bingham; but, helmsman, let her fall off a couple of points, so as to give us a closer look."

The helmsman obeyed, and going forward Fred Le Roy sprang upon the lee bulwarks and clung to the ratlines, while he bent his gaze earnestly upon the dancing red light.

Suddenly he saw it disappear, and a moment after it was swung around in a circle.

"Ho at the helm there!" he shouted.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Let her fall off more—there! steady as you are!" and the schooner was now pointing for the red light.

Going aft once more Captain Le Roy remarked:

"Mr. Fairfax, there is some one in that boat."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, sir, and I think it is your daughter, for I noted a woman's form, as she swung the lantern around."

"Heaven grant that it be she! But can she have been so adrift from the schooner?"

"Yes, for the boat was almost in the wake of the chase when first sighted by the lookout."

"It may be some poor unfortunate adrift, whom the pirate did not attempt to pick up."

"Perhaps, Mr. Fairfax, but I shall not be so heartless, for we will soon have the occupant aboard."

"Luff, helmsman, luff sharp, and lay her to! Stand by, men, to lower away the life-boat, and go after that craft, for its occupant is a woman!"

The orders were quickly obeyed, and as the life-boat was being launched, Captain Le Roy shouted:

"Ho the boat, ahoy!"

His voice went floating over the waters, and all listened attentively for a reply.

Then it came, in a musical, feminine voice:

"Ahoy the schooner, ahoy!"

"Thank God! It is my child!" cried the planter, and Fred Le Roy said:

"Go after her, sir, in the life-boat, if you desire."

But the planter was already ready to do so, and the boat, manned by a sturdy crew, rowed away from the schooner, bounding over the rough waters in a frightful manner.

Captain Le Roy watched her course most anxiously, saw her reach the drifting skiff, and

when she came alongside stood ready to aid Faustine on board.

"Captain Le Roy, my daughter, sir, whom your gallant pursuit has rescued from a fearful fate," said the planter, with deep emotion.

"Miss Fairfax, I gladly welcome you on board of the *Bride of the Wind*, and my cabin is wholly at your disposal as long as you care to occupy it," and Captain Le Roy led the maiden aft, while she said in a low, earnest tone:

"Oh, sir, you do not know from what you have saved me."

"You are safe now, Miss Fairfax, so pray do not worry about your misfortune."

"Pardon me now, please, while I see that we again give chase to that scamp."

"I fear, sir, he has accomplished his intention in freeing me, which was to cause you to lose time in picking me up."

"He certainly has gained a good lead once more, and with this storm about to break, I fear we will have difficulty now in keeping our eyes upon him; but your rescue was the main thing to be considered, and we can punish him at another time," and the young captain ordered the schooner to again continue the chase, while Mr. Fairfax stood with his daughter listening to her story of her treatment at the hands of Redfield Romer.

Still did Faustine keep her secret as to who the man was, not caring to tell even her father that he whom she once loved had fallen so low as to become a kidnapper, and to threaten her life as he had.

"Now I am convinced, my child, that the man meant to kidnap you that night from Harbor View, and was doubtless prowling about the grounds for that purpose, when your pistol-shot frightened him off by giving the alarm."

"A pretty shrewd guess that," thought Faustine, but she did not say it.

Captain Le Roy coming aft at this time, the planter told him of the strange conduct of the *Bother* in dogging the *Dauntless* packet from New Orleans to New York, the race with the fleet, the alarm given by Faustine's pistol, at Harbor View, and the manner in which the little schooner had hung in the wake of the *Gulf Queen* until the afternoon just past.

"That man has some deep motive in all this, Mr. Fairfax," said Captain Le Roy, and then he added:

"Do you remember to have seen him before, sir?"

Faustine was very glad she had not been asked that question, while her father responded:

"No, and yet his face had a familiar look in it to me; but, if I have met him I cannot recall when and where."

"Did he speak of his motive for his capture of you, my child?"

Faustine was glad it was moonlight, but she answered:

"I almost think the man is mad, father, for when I refused to be his bride, as I told you, he sprang upon the bulwark with me and swore I should be the bride of the sea."

"His manner was tragic and wild, and, but for the shot that Captain Le Roy sent after the schooner, I verily believe he would have thrown me overboard."

"I am happy in having been near, Miss Fairfax."

"We heard the firing, which was doubtless for the brig to come to, but we were enveloped in a mist that came from off-shore, and it bore down with us until we came near the brig, when I quickly learned what was the matter."

"Ah! we must take in sail, for this wind is getting in an ugly mood."

"And the chase will escape us?" eagerly asked Faustine.

"I fear so, in the storm, though I hope not," was the answer as he went forward and issued his orders to his men.

Under shortened sail the *Bride of the Sea* held on, forging swiftly through the waters, while the captain of the chase won the admiration of all by holding on to his canvas even to his topsails, in the very face of the storm sweeping down upon him.

Soon the moon became obscured by clouds, and the sea was darkened over, and then, as the storm seemed upon the chase, suddenly down came her topsails, her mainsail, mizzensail and jibs followed quickly, and in an instant she was stripped to meet the blow.

Another second and she had disappeared, for the storm had swept upon her and hidden her from sight.

"Every man keep an eye on that schooner!" shouted Captain Le Roy, and a moment after, he called out in trumpet tones:

"Stand by to take in sail! let everything fly! strip her to her poles, for this is a wicked storm we have to meet."

Then Captain Le Roy would have taken Faustine to the cabin; but she refused to go, and, supported by her father stood awaiting for the shock.

"Down all! hold hard for your lives."

The warning came none too soon, and Fred Le Roy sprang forward and grasped Faustine with his strong arm, as the storm broke upon the devoted craft.

For a few moments the *Bride of the Wind*

was roughly handled by the tempest; then storm sails were set, and she began to get headway once more.

Bounding, lurching, she held on through the furious wind and waves for half an hour, and then the fury of the gale was over.

But where was the chase?

Nowhere could she be seen.

Every eye was strained out over the water to catch a view of her, and the moonlight coming out once more, aided their sight; but not a vestige of her was to be seen far or near.

"She has escaped us," said Captain Le Roy.

"Thank God!" was Faustine's fervent whisper.

"You think he has gone down, then?" asked the planter.

"No, I think he scudded under bare poles before the storm, and thus passed us unseen; but now, sir, tell me whether I shall try and overhaul the *Gulf Queen*, and put you on board, or take you to your home in my schooner?"

"It would cause you less inconvenience, Captain Le Roy, to take us home, for I live but a hundred miles from here, and I can run across the lake in my own yacht and get our baggage from the brig," said Mr. Fairfax.

And it being thus decided, the *Bride of the Wind* was put away for *Waveside Plantation*.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DOUBLE SURPRISE.

UPON the beautiful shores of waters adjacent to Mobile Bay still stands an old mansion that was once the home of Duncan Fairfax and his father before him.

It was beautifully situated, with ornamental grounds running down to the sandy beach, and a forest of giant pines, magnolias and oaks in the rear.

A silent, stern man, Colonel Fairfax, the father of Duncan, had married a young girl, for whom he had killed his rival—his best friend before love came between them to win.

It had been a duel to the death, for Colonel Fairfax, a man who had won fame in the English army, had nearly lost his life in this encounter with his rival; he had been dangerously wounded and lay for months between life and death.

Recovering at length, he had taken his slaves and household effects, sold his broad Virginia lands, and with his wife had gone off on a ship, no one knew where.

Driven by a storm into what is now known as Mississippi Sound, he was so pleased with his surroundings that he determined to look about there for a home, when it had been his intention to settle upon the *Father of Waters*, in the vicinity of New Orleans.

A spot was soon found, and a house was built of logs until a mansion could be erected.

The country was sparsely settled, but this he cared not for, and soon, out of a wilderness, he made a garden of beauty, and within a few years' time the mansion was finished, and was a grand old homestead for those days, well worthy of the Spanish nobles that had just made their homes along those shores.

Several thousand acres were cleared for fields, substantial cabins were erected for the slaves, a stanch boat, as cargo-carrier and pleasure-craft combined, was purchased, and Colonel Fairfax was content with his new venture.

In that home was Duncan Fairfax born, and under his mother's tuition he received a fair education until his eighteenth year, though he was more fond of his dogs, rifle and boat than of his studies.

Returning from a sail one day Duncan Fairfax found his father dead seated in the library, and he became master of *Waveside* and its belongings.

Never happy in her life of a recluse, Mrs. Fairfax was glad to go away, and urged her son to accompany her to Virginia.

This he did and her health failing, he took her from place to place in the hope that she would improve.

But she faded slowly away and the day that Duncan Fairfax reached his twenty-first year, she died.

Comforted in his sorrow by a sweet little Virginia cousin, Duncan had asked her to become his wife, and gladly had she accepted, for she deeply loved the handsome boy planter, and she went with him to *Waveside*, and their lives were spent in quiet happiness.

Neighbors had begun to settle near them, Mobile and Pensacola were becoming more important cities each year, and New Orleans was not a hundred miles distant, so they had ample society if they needed it, and were wont to enjoy many a pleasant cruise in their plantation lugger, a comfortable and stanch craft used for taking the products of the place to the towns.

Here at *Waveside*, too, Faustine was born, and a happy home it was until death came and claimed Mrs. Fairfax.

Then Faustine was sent North to boarding-school, and the lonely planter devoted his time to the improvement of his estate, and he had done all in his power to make it an earthly Paradise in which to welcome his daughter when she would return to her home.

In anticipation of her coming, too, the neighboring planters were on the *qui-vive*, for they remembered her as a beautiful girl of fifteen, knew she was heiress to vast riches, and they had sons whom they would be only too happy to have win the lovely girl.

Having wholly refitted and newly furnished Waveside, Duncan Fairfax knew that he would give his daughter a joyful surprise, and he stood on the deck of the *Bride of the Wind*, acting as pilot, while the graceful schooner sailed up toward his home.

By his side was Faustine, talking with Captain Le Roy, whom she could not but admit to herself was a most fascinating man.

With head-winds, and not caring to run in by night, it was two days after losing sight of the *Bother* in the storm before the pretty schooner came in sight of the tower on one wing of the Waveside mansion.

In that time the planter and his daughter had become quite well acquainted with the handsome young captain of the *Bride of the Wind*, and they had much to thank him for in his extreme kindness to them.

"There is Waveside!" cried Faustine, as the tower came into view from the schooner's deck.

"Yes, there is our home, Captain Le Roy, and I hope within an hour to have you as my guest, after all you have done for me and mine," said the planter.

"Thank you, sir, but my duties will not admit of my stopping, I am sorry to say; but you have a lordly home, Mr. Fairfax, as grand as an old English estate," and the young sailor gazed with admiration upon the handsome mansion and its surroundings.

"And there is a fine estate on the hill-crest yonder, sir," and Captain Le Roy pointed to a distant hill, where stood a fine mansion.

"You have, captain, by a strange coincidence, named the estate, for it is called *Hillcrest*, and is the property of a widow, whose only son, and heir, I fear is going a trifle wild, of late."

"Ah, rather, I am sorry to hear this of my old beau, Claude Avon; for it must be a sad blow to his mother and sister," said Faustine.

"Your coming may reform him, Miss Fairfax," suggested Captain Le Roy, and the tone in which he spoke caused her to glance quickly into his face, when he added in a low tone:

"If he were an old beau, three years ago, it would be but natural that he would renew the old love, and strive hard to win a prize so precious."

She blushed, but made no reply, and soon after the schooner entered the cove, when suddenly from a miniature fort a gun burst forth a salute.

"It is old Pomp, my negro manager, saluting you, Captain Le Roy, as he recognizes that you are a vessel-of-war."

"I shall return the salute, sir, for the honor done me," and the young captain gave orders for the schooner to answer the salute.

"Why, Captain Le Roy, where is your flag?" cried Faustine suddenly, glancing up at the peak.

"It has not been raised to-day, Miss Fairfax," was the reply, and Faustine was surprised that a vessel so well disciplined as was the schooner, should neglect to show her colors.

Dropping anchor a boat was lowered, and Captain Le Roy escorted his guests to the shore, when he said, with a tone of sadness in his voice:

"Here we must say good-by."

"But surely you will come up to the mansion, if but for tea, Captain Le Roy?" urged the planter, while Faustine added:

"Would you desert us, after all we owe you, without crossing the threshold of our home?"

"My duties compel it, I deeply regret to say; but see, your slaves have recognized you and come to give you greeting. Farewell," and raising his cap politely he turned and sprang into his boat ere the surprised planter and Faustine could utter a word.

Both were deeply hurt at his action, and yet the slaves crowding about them in scores, to give them welcome, caused them to momentarily forget the strange conduct of the young captain.

When they glanced toward the schooner she was standing rapidly out to sea under clouds of canvas.

Try as they might Mr. Fairfax and Faustine could arrive at no solution of the mystery, and for a couple of days the maiden was too much taken up with admiring her home in all its luxury and beauty, to think much of the handsome young sailor who had served her so well.

But, the third morning, when she was alone, her maid told her that the *Bride of the Wind* was at anchor in the harbor.

As she descended to the piazza she saw Captain Le Roy coming up the steps, and stepping forward said warmly:

"This is indeed a surprise, Captain Le Roy, and for it I forgive you running off and deserting us as you did the other day."

She stopped short, for the captain's face wore a look of intense surprise, while taking off his hat he bowed low and said:

"Pardon me, lady, but though you call me by my name, I am sure that we have never before met."

"Why, Captain Le Roy, what do you mean?" asked Faustine, piqued at his words and manner.

"Just what I say, lady. We have never before met, for, had we done so, I could never have been so remiss as to forget it."

"Is he mad?" she asked herself, and then she glanced at him from head to foot.

Surely it was Fred Le Roy.

Then she glanced at the schooner not a quarter of a mile distant.

Surely that was the *Bride of the Wind*.

"Captain Le Roy, you may consider this a joke, but I fail to appreciate it," she said, coldly.

"Pardon me, lady, but I am Fred Le Roy, captain of the American schooner-of-war *Bride of the Wind*, and I am sent into these waters by my Government to serve as a patrol against pirates, and I came hither hoping that I could gain certain information I seek from the owner of this plantation."

"Can I say more?"

He looked perfectly sincere, and Faustine was bewildered; but just then her father rode up, having been riding over the plantation, as was his wont before breakfast, and called out:

"Ho, Le Roy! I am delighted to see you, and came home at once when one of the boys told me your schooner was coming in. Welcome to Waveside," and coming up the steps the planter warmly grasped the officer's hand.

"Father, this gentleman says that he is not the one we believe him," said Faustine, more and more bewildered.

"My name is Le Roy, sir, but I have never before met you, or this young lady, to my certain knowledge."

Mr. Fairfax looked at him sharply, and said: "Egad, the man is mad, for if he is not Captain Fred Le Roy then he is the devil in his guise."

CHAPTER IX.

THE STRANGE VOICE ON THE SEA.

The somewhat blunt remark of Mr. Fairfax, that either the man before him was the Captain Le Roy whom he had known, and who had rescued Faustine, or it was the devil in his guise, seemed to anger the gentleman, for he said, sharply:

"I called, sir, to ask your aid in a work I had to do for the Government, but as there seems to be some mistake upon both sides, I will bid you adieu."

He turned as he spoke, raised his cap and descended the steps.

"My child, it is poor Le Roy, but he is mad! I will recall him, for he must be looked to," and Mr. Fairfax started after him.

"Captain Le Roy, one moment, please!"

The officer turned, and waited in stern silence.

"It pains me deeply to see you fail to recognize either my daughter, whom you so gallantly rescued from a pirate, or myself; but I beg you to come into the house and have breakfast with us, and I guess we can make all come right in the end."

"Rescued your daughter from a pirate, sir? Surely you must be dreaming, or have I struck a mad-house?" replied the officer.

"You are where you are welcome, sir, doubly so, as you should know. Come, Le Roy, breakfast with us, and let us talk over our sail together."

"Our sail together?"

"Yes, when your fleet *Bride of the Wind* ran down the pirate and forced him to yield up my child."

The sailor shook his head sadly, and said:

"My dear sir, I must really ask you to excuse me, as my duties call me at once away."

"Your very words when last you were here; but you must not go now."

"Yes, do come, Captain Le Roy," urged Faustine, from the piazza.

But the officer looked at her, bowed low, and turning strode away.

"Will you not follow him, father?" asked Faustine.

"No, for it will do no good."

"What can it mean?"

"It means that he is insane—actually insane, my child."

"How fearfully sad; but what can be done?"

"Nothing."

"But his vessel, his crew?"

"They will soon realize it and keep him in safety."

"Who would have dreamed of such a thing in him?"

"No one, for he had as strong a head, I thought, as any man I ever met; but he's utterly gone, now."

"See, he has gotten into his boat, and the crew are pulling back to the schooner."

They stood watching the vessel until it spread sail and glided away, and then they went in to breakfast, which had been waiting for some time.

Faustine was sadly blue, for she greatly admired the young sailor, and there was just the dawning in her heart that he was a man she could learn to love with all her soul.

Her father saw her gloomy mood and said:

"Faustine, what do you say to running over to New Orleans with me in the *Arrow*, for I wish to make some purchases, and also to bring back our baggage from the brig?"

"I should like it, and I would be most happy to take Irene Avon with me."

"And Claude, too, eh?" asked the planter with a smile.

"Yes, sir, for we might keep him out of mischief by so doing, for Irene, when over here yesterday, said that he intended running up to Pensacola, and they were so sorry to have him go there, as he always lost heavily at gambling."

"Then drive over and ask them to accompany us, and I will see to getting the *Arrow* ready and the crew on board, for I would like to start this afternoon, and go while we have moonlight nights."

"Will you run around by the river, father, or cross the lake?"

"I'll go around by the river, as that will give us a longer cruise; but I cannot get over Le Roy's strange conduct," and the planter inadvertently returned to the visit of the commander of the *Bride of the Wind*.

Toward sunset that evening the *Arrow*, a trimly-built lugger, but withal roomy and comfortable, stood out of the Waveside harbor, a negro crew on her decks, and Leon, a Creole as sailing-master, and a good one he was, too, knowing every part of the Gulf coast from Key West to the Balize.

Upon the deck, enjoying greatly the beauty of the evening and the scenery, were the planter, Faustine and two others, Claude and Irene Avon.

The former was a man of twenty-two, a dashing fellow, with a frank, fearless face, yet it was marred by a look of dissipation strangely stamped on one so young.

He was attired in a free-and-easy sailor suit, and held a cigar between his lips, while his eyes seemed to rest with more enjoyment upon the face of Faustine than upon the scenery.

His sister was a maiden of eighteen, with a Madonna-like face, so sweetly lovely it was, and a manner gentle and winning.

The two, Faustine and Irene, had been friends from childhood, and it had been a severe disappointment to the Heiress of Avon, as Irene was called, when Faustine went North to school; but they had corresponded with each other, and hardly had the planter welcomed his daughter home again, when up dashed Claude and his sister on horseback, to bid her also welcome.

Both maidens had their negress maids with them, the Waveside butler was in charge of the larder, which was well stocked, so that all anticipated a pleasant cruise, a few days' enjoyment in the city of New Orleans, and a safe return home.

The moon arose about an hour after sunset, the breeze was balmy and came laden with the perfume of flowers from the land, and all sat on deck drinking in the beauty of the scene.

Sending into the cabin for her guitar Faustine sang several ballads, her voice full of wondrous beauty floating out far across the waters.

Asked by Claude Avon to sing an old sea melody, a favorite of his, she did so, but, hardly had her voice died away, when all started, as from an island a quarter of a mile distant there came in response a manly voice singing with great expression in a fine tenor the words of an old ballad.

All seemed breathless as the words were wafted to their ears:

"Come o'er the sea,
Maiden, with me;
Come where the wild wind blows!
Seasons may roll,
But the true soul
Burns the same where'er it goes."

When the voice was hushed not a word was spoken upon the deck of the *Arrow*.

The negroes, in their superstitious dread, believed that it was not from the lips of man that the song fell, and the helmsman would have been glad to have squared away before the wind and fled from the vicinity of the island which he at once believed haunted.

But there was a channel which he had to follow, and so he held on, though his hands trembled as he held the tiller.

"What a superb voice!" at last the planter said.

"Who can it be that possesses it, for that was not sung by any of the island fishermen?" Irene Avon remarked, hardly speaking above a whisper, for fear she might break the charm.

"Sing again, Faustine," requested Claude Avon.

"Yes, my child, sing again, and maybe he will answer you as before."

"No, father, I do not care to sing any more," was the low reply.

"Why, Faustine, you really seem impressed by the voice," said Irene.

"I am," was the quiet rejoinder. "Deeply so."

"Dat hain't no human folks' voice, massa," declared the negro helmsman, solemnly.

"What do you think, Leon?" asked the plant-

er of the copper-colored sailing-master, who was said to have as much Indian blood in his veins as there was African.

"I am afraid it is a human voice, sir," was the somewhat significant reply, and just then the planter saw Leon motion to him.

"Hark!"

It was Irene that spoke, and all was stilled, as once more over the moonlit waters came the same voice in song, but this time singing an inspiring air:

"My boat's by the shore, my barque's on the bay
And both must be gone ere the dawn of the day;
So come, lady, come! I am waiting for thee.
For this night or never, my bride thou shalt be.

"Forgive my rough mood, unaccustomed to woo,
I sue not perhaps, as your land lovers do,
My voice has been tuned to the notes of the gun,
That startle the deep when the combat's begun.

"And heavy and hard is the grasp of that hand,
Whose back has been ever the guide of the band,
But think not of these and this night thou'lt be
mine.

And the plume of the proudest shall lower to
thine."

The voice ceased and again all was hushed, when Irene Avon happened to see that Faustine had buried her face in her hands and was sobbing bitterly.

"Poor, dear Faustine! how that voice has impressed you!" said Irene, softly.

"It has; but it is over now, and was only a momentary weakness," and Faustine arose, paced her arm about the waist of Irene, and walked forward, while Mr. Fairfax went to see what it was that Leon wanted.

"Can she have known that voice?" muttered Claude Avon, as he lighted a fresh cigar. "If so, a man with such a voice is a dangerous rival. Doubtless he is one of the officers of the vessel-of-war that brought them home, and she is anchored among the islands somewhere.

"It may be that she is in love already, and the voice recalled her lover. No, no, this must not be, for Faustine Fairfax must be my wife!" and there was a flash of determination in Claude Avon's eyes that showed he meant what he said in his lowly muttered words.

CHAPTER X.

PURSUER AND PURSUED.

"WELL, Leon, you motioned to me?" said the planter, as he walked amidships and joined the sailing-master of the lugger.

"Yes, master, I wanted to speak with you, sir."

"Out with it, Leon."

The planter had every confidence in the man, and knew that his views were not to be idly set aside, while the manner of Leon convinced him that he had something of importance to communicate.

"Master," began Leon, speaking without the slightest negro dialect, though with a little accent, for his first language had been French, as his mother had been a Creole negress. "Master, no fishermen on the island ever sung like that man, sir."

"That is true, Leon."

"There are freebooters in these waters, sir."

"Ah!"

"Yes, sir."

"And you think that may be one of them?"

"Yes, sir."

"And his vessel?"

"Behind the island, sir."

"She could hide there, could she?"

"Easily, sir, for there are some tall pines on the island, master."

"True."

"And the water?"

"Is deep enough, sir, for anything that draws less than fifteen feet."

"We must be careful then, Leon."

"Yes, sir, I think it would be well to crack on all the sail the Arrow will stand, sir."

"Do so, then, and with this breeze and a good start, as we have, we should be able to keep away from any ordinary craft with ease, Leon."

"The Arrow is fast, sir, but there are faster vessels; but we will do our best," and soon after Mr. Fairfax returned to his place aft, Leon called out to the crew of eight negroes:

"Come, boys, we must get the best out of this ten-knot breeze, so crowd on all sail, and we'll make the Arrow fly!"

The crew sprung to their posts, the canvas was quickly set, and, as the schooner lay well over, and shot swiftly ahead under the additional canvas, and the rapidly increasing breeze, the negroes broke forth in one of their inspiring boatman's songs, their rich voices filling the air with music.

"That's it, boys! another song," cried the planter, as he sat aft, with the two young ladies and Claude Avon.

Faustine had controlled what emotion she had felt, at the sound of the voice from the island, and now seemed to enjoy the singing of the crew; but she kept her eyes astern, as though watching the silvery wake left by the vessels, the phosphorescent spray sparkling like myri-

ads of diamonds, and suddenly, almost in a wild cry, there broke from her lips:

"Sail ho! sail ho!"

The song seemed to freeze on the lips of the negroes, while Leon sprung into the rigging and said, as he glanced astern:

"Missy has got sharp eyes, for I didn't see the sail before she called."

"You see it now, Leon?"

"Yes, missy."

"What do you make her out?" tersely asked Faustine, who had risen to her feet, as had the others.

"A schooner, missy, and crowding on sail."

All eyes were now upon the schooner, which was broadside to the Arrow and about three-quarters of a mile distant.

"She is coming out from the lee of the island, from whence came that man's voice," said Claude Avon.

"Yes, she certainly is," remarked the planter.

"She cannot be in chase of us, as she is heading out to sea," Irene Avon said.

"She is heading out to round a reef, and then she will come on in our wake, I am sure."

It was Faustine that spoke, and her father said:

"Why, child, you remember these waters well to recall that reef."

"I remember it, father, and that schooner has a good pilot on board for these waters, or she could never run about here at night as she does; but, Leon, can you not make the Arrow do better than she is doing?"

And there was a shade of anxiety in Faustine's voice as she asked the question.

"With more wind only, missy, and we are getting it, for it blows ten knots now, and when we passed the island it was but four."

"The lugger sails best in a blow?"

"Yes, missy; but she is fast in any breeze."

"And yonder craft is fast," muttered the young girl.

And then she called out as the schooner suddenly changed her course:

"See! he rounds the reef and is in chase."

"Now, good Arrow, do your best, for much depends upon you."

"Do not be nervous, Faustine, for you appear to dread that vessel greatly," whispered Irene.

"I do, more than you can imagine."

"But have you cause?"

"Yes."

"Will you not tell me?"

"The man whom we heard singing commands yonder craft."

"But, how do you know?"

"I recognized his voice."

"You know him then, Faustine?"

"Alas, yes!"

"Tell me more, for you excite my fear as well as my curiosity."

"I told you how I was kidnapped from the brig's deck!"

"Yes."

"That man is the one who took me from the Gulf Queen."

"Oh, Faustine! can this be so?"

"It is, Irene."

"But are you sure?"

"Certain."

"I sincerely hope you are mistaken, Faustine."

"I cannot be, for I recognized his vessel when she was broadside to."

"Ah!"

"I turned the glass upon her, and what I saw convinced me that I was right about the voice I heard."

"Heaven grant you are mistaken; but I really dread that you are right."

"I know it," was the stern reply.

"And he is following us to rob us?"

"He is following us to capture me."

"But how can he know you are on board?"

"He heard me sing."

"Still it would be impossible, meeting you but once on his vessel, to recognize your voice."

"It's—"

But Faustine checked herself in what she was going to say, and which would have betrayed her secret as to having met the one she spoke of before his kidnapping her, and said instead:

"He doubtless recognized my voice; but see, he is gaining, as I knew he would."

"It's very strange, missy, for the vessel that walks up upon the Arrow that way is a marvel of a craft," said Leon, who overheard her remark.

"He will overtake us within the hour," firmly said Faustine.

"Maybe sooner, if he opens fire, missy."

"He will not fire at us, Leon, but over us, I am certain," and as though to verify her words a glare of red flame shot out from the bows of the schooner, and an iron shot came flying over the lugger, but far above her.

"I told you so, Leon."

"Yes, missy; but that was for us to come to; the next will be closer."

"I think not, Leon."

Again a shot was fired, and as before flew far over the lugger.

A third shot followed suit, and then all on board the Arrow distinctly heard the command:

"At that gun there! cease firing!"

"That was the same voice that we heard singing," cried Mr. Fairfax.

"Yes, it is a voice among a thousand," Claude Avon remarked.

"But why do they cease firing?" asked Irene.

"He does not wish to harm the lugger, or any one on board, Irene, so intends to run us down and catch us, as a hound would a hare," said Faustine.

A moment after Leon said:

"She gains awful fast on us."

"Leon!" suddenly said Faustine.

"Missy."

"You know this coast well?"

"Yes, missy."

"Is not that the string of islands the negroes call the Devil's Chain?" and she pointed half a mile ahead to where were visible, upon their starboard bow, a line of islands, some of them overgrown with bush, a few with tall pines upon them, and the remainder little more than rocky islets."

"Yes, missy."

"Is there not a pass between the two larger ones?"

"Yes, missy; but it is an awful dangerous one."

"I know that, for I have heard that fishing craft have been wrecked in attempting to go through; but there is open water beyond, and we can run around into the gulf that way?"

"Yes, missy."

"You know that channel through the Devil's Chain, Leon?"

"I knew it well years ago, missy."

"Has it changed?"

"I guess not, missy, not much."

"Have you forgotten it?"

"No, missy; but I'd fear to try it."

"Leon, I know well your skill and nerve, so head for that channel, and run the Arrow through the Devil's Chain, for of the two evils, being wrecked, or captured by a pirate, let us choose the least," came in almost stern tones from the lips of the young girl.

Springing to the tiller and grasping it, Leon the half-breed pilot cried:

"Missy, I will risk it for your sake!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE TABLES TURNED.

WHEN Leon sprung to the tiller of the Arrow, with the remark that he would risk the dangerous channel through the Devil's Chain, Faustine gave a sigh of deep relief, while the others on board the lugger, especially the negro crew, seemed to be filled with even greater dread than they felt for the pirate craft in the chase.

All knew Leon, however, and had confidence in his skill and coolness; but then the channel he meant to attempt had been the scene of many a wreck, they said, and there was a belief among the superstitious, that the spirits of those lost there, were wont to sit on the rocks and islands, and mock with laughter others who attempted the dangerous channel.

So, with bated breath all awaited the ordeal.

Holding on under full canvas, until he neared the channel, Leon managed to keep the schooner from drawing as near as she otherwise would, had he shortened his canvas; and so still held nearly a half of a mile lead of the pursuer when he entered the first part of the dangerous pass.

Then came his order quickly given, and as promptly executed, to take in all sail except the jib and mainsail.

The planter and Claude Avon, both good sailors, took their stands near, to be of any service, while Faustine and Irene, with hands clasped, stood just behind the bronzed-skin pilot, watching his every motion.

Though under shortened sail, the Arrow sped swiftly along, the wind over her starboard quarter, and, as there appeared to be no opening ahead, she seemed to be rushing directly upon her own destruction.

The island ahead appeared to be an unbroken line of rock, thicket and pine trees that rose high in the air, and they extended thus for nearly half a mile, forming beyond them a good harbor, which could be reached by rounding the entire chain of isles.

By running through the channel, if the schooner could not follow, the Arrow would gain half a dozen miles, which would be lead enough to enable her to reach port before her pursuer could catch her.

As the lugger neared the dark line that threatened her with destruction, a streak of light suddenly appeared ahead, and the planter, with a sigh of relief, said quietly,

"You hit the right spot, Leon."

"Yes, master," was the calm reply.

Nearing the islands the opening between them, at first appearing like a narrow chasm, widened until it could be seen there were a hundred feet between them.

But this was between the foliage upon either island, the rocky points jutting out until barely a space of forty feet formed the channel.

The tide being upon the flood, a torrent of

water ran through the channel like a mill-race, and there being half a dozen bends in the passage to open and deep water beyond, it can be seen that the risk was indeed terrible.

But the wind held good through the pass, and the Arrow headed herself to perfection, so that Leon felt that the risk was worth taking when a pirate was in chase.

All held their breath, as the bow-sprit of the lugger seemed to be going into the pine tacket; but, suddenly, it fell off sharply; a word was given to the crew; the sheets were eased off, and dead before the wind the Arrow drove.

But only for a moment, for around flew her bows a dozen points, the sheets were trimmed close, and she sped along broadside to the islands.

"Pirate schooner is following us even here!" cried Faustine with dire alarm.

All eyes at once sought the schooner, and they beheld her rushing directly for the channel.

"If he follows us he will be wrecked, missy, for there is not half a dozen men in the Gulf who can bring a craft through there," Leon declared.

"Then if she strikes, we must go in the boats to their aid," cried Faustine, her better nature showing itself even toward her worst enemy.

For only a few lengths the lugger ran with broadside to the island, and then a low order from Leon caused the sheets to be slackened and away she went before the wind once more.

"Yonder is the Death Rock, master," said Leon, pointing to a ragged reef ahead.

"That is where so many craft have struck there," observed the planter, with deep interest.

"Yes, master."

"And there is where the spirits of the lost, sit and mock with laughter others who attempt this gantlet to run," Faustine remarked.

"Yes, missy, but they will not laugh at us to-night, for—haul in lively, boys! there, make fast—for we are through the channel."

A cheer followed Leon's words, and Mr. Fairfax said earnestly:

"Leon, my brave fellow, you have earned your freedom by this night's good work."

"Thank you, master; but I am content as I am, as long as I am your slave or Missy Faustine's," was the humble reply.

"God bless you, good Leon!" Faustine said, earnestly.

And glancing away to hide her tears, her eyes fell upon a sail and she sung out in true nautical style:

"Sail, ho!"

It was a large schooner, but not their pursuer, and she was lying at anchor in the open water ahead, but close in under the shadow of one of the islands.

As the moonlight fell suddenly upon her it could be seen that her crew were setting sail and getting up the anchor.

"There comes the pirate, and he, too, has run the gantlet in safety," cried Claude Avon.

And as he spoke the pursuing schooner was seen to round the Death Rock and shoot out into open water.

"She has a pilot, and one of six men, master, for no others know the passage through Devil's Chain," answered Leon, showing some excitement, where at his greatest danger he had been perfectly calm.

"It must be then, Leon, that she has a pilot; but if yonder schooner is not the Bride of the Wind I am greatly mistaken. What do you say, my child?"

"It is the Bride of the Wind, father, and we are saved!"

She uttered the last words in a voice that rung with joy.

"She is moving now, yes, and going away from us," cried Irene in amazement.

"Faustine, you have a remarkably clear voice, and can throw it a long way; so hail the Bride of the Wind and tell him we need his aid, for our pursuer is pressing hotly on."

Raising her voice, Faustine sent it across the waters with a clearness and power that surprised herself:

"Ho, the Bride of the Wind, ahoy! ahoy! a-h-o-y!"

A moment of breathless suspense, and then came ringing over the sea, like bugle notes in their power and distinctness, the answer:

"Ay, ay! we will bear down and speak you!"

"That is a finer voice than was the singer's," Claude Avon decided.

"It is Captain Le Roy's voice, for it, too, is one among thousands," rejoined the planter.

The Bride of the Wind was seen to immediately wear around and head to windward, to meet the Arrow, while in the same voice was heard the order:

"To your quarters, men, for yonder comes a large schooner in chase of the lugger."

"They had not seen us," said Irene.

"Nor our pursuer," Claude Avon added.

"Not until Faustine hailed," remarked Mr. Fairfax.

"No, master; they had not expected vessels through that way," quietly said Leon.

"Ah! the pirate has sighted the Bride!" cried

Claude, excitedly, and at his words all saw that there was some excitement visible on board their pursuer, for, immediately after she began to wear around; but, as she did so, she viciously fired a broadside at the Bride of the Wind, though at the risk of hitting the Arrow.

Some of the iron messengers took effect, for there was heard the crash of timbers on board the cruiser, and the cries of wounded men; but she could not return the fire as the Arrow was now directly in the range between them.

"The pirate is putting back for the channel through the islands," announced the planter.

"It is his only chance, master, and I will run out of range, so the cruiser can give him a broadside," and Leon put his helm down, and instantly Captain Le Roy took the advantage thus offered to fire upon the pursuing schooner, which had so suddenly had the tables turned upon her.

CHAPTER XII.

STRANGELY MET.

THE Bride of the Wind was only able to fire a couple of shots from her large fore-castle pivot gun, not enough to get the range, when the schooner shot into the channel out of sight.

Seeing this, the Bride of the Wind changed her course and headed for the Arrow, Leon also steering so as to meet her.

As she drew near there came the hail in Captain Le Roy's superb voice:

"Ho, the lugger! what craft is that?"

"Answer him, Faustine," said her father.

"The Arrow, from Waveside Plantation."

"Hal then I know that voice as Miss Fairfax," answered Captain Le Roy.

"Yes, I am Miss Fairfax, and father and some friends are on board, so please join us."

"May I not ask that you board my schooner, for I will send a boat," came the reply.

"Yes, we will come on board," Faustine eagerly called back, and the two vessels luffing up, lay to, while soon after Mr. Fairfax and his party entered the boat that ran alongside, and were soon on the deck of the schooner.

Fred Le Roy met them at the gangway, welcomed them warmly, bowing low to Irene, and grasping Claude Avon's hand when introduced, and said:

"I had not anticipated this pleasure and honor so soon again, Miss Fairfax."

"Nor had I anticipated that I should so soon owe you gratitude for more than life, Captain Le Roy, for the man you to-night saved me from was my kidnapper from the Gulf Queen."

"Indeed! I thought his vessel had a familiar look, though I could not see her well."

"We heard the firing beyond the islands, and yet I remained at anchor until it entered my mind to get under way, and soon after I heard your hail."

"You have a superb voice, Miss Fairfax; but tell me, please, did you come across the island, for I knew not of a channel there?"

"Yes, there is a channel, and it has wrecked so many vessels, and is known to so few, that we were amazed to see the schooner follow us as she did."

"Had it not been for your presence, Captain Le Roy, we would have been taken," and Faustine spoke with a tremor in her voice.

"It was an accidental service, as before, Miss Fairfax, so I deserve no thanks; but permit me to offer you the hospitalities of my cabin," he added, as a servant entered with wines and refreshments.

"Do you think it kind, Captain Le Roy, to twice refuse the hospitality of Waveside, and yet place us under more obligations to you?" asked Faustine.

"Once, Miss Fairfax, I refused, but my duties called me elsewhere, as I told you, and without delay."

The planter glanced at his daughter, and she at him.

They had not spoken to their guests of the captain's second visit to Waveside, and so the Avons knew nothing of it.

"The day you kindly carried us home, I refer to, Captain Le Roy, and yesterday morning, when you visited us."

"May I ask why it was you pleaded ignorance of ever having met my father or myself before?"

"I confess to being in the dark, Miss Fairfax, as to your words," and Fred Le Roy glanced from one to the other, as though for enlightenment.

"You surely remember being at Waveside yesterday morning?" said the planter.

"Indeed, sir, I was not."

"My dear Le Roy, do you mean to say that you were not at my plantation early yesterday morning?" asked the surprised planter.

"I was not there, sir."

"You did not run into the harborage, drop anchor and come ashore?"

"I did not, sir."

"Did not come up to the mansion, meet Faustine, and afterward myself?"

"No, Mr. Fairfax."

"And, saying that you did not know us, had never seen us before, refuse all offers of hospi-

talities, wheel on your heel, and, going back to your vessel, set sail and depart?"

"Such as you state, Mr. Fairfax, did not occur, as far as I am concerned," was the firm response.

"Then I will say to you now, what I supposed I said to you yesterday, that it was either you, Captain Le Roy, or the devil in your guise."

"You surprise me, Mr. Fairfax, surprise me greatly, sir; but, upon my honor, I have not seen you, or been near your plantation, since I left you and your daughter on your pier."

"Then you have a double, Le Roy, your schooner has a double, and, egad, your crew must have doubles," was the blunt reply.

Fred Le Roy laughed lightly at this and replied:

"I assure you, sir, I would like much to meet my double, and certainly to find the double of my beautiful Bride of the Wind."

"Well, sir, the one that visited us said his name was Captain Fred Le Roy—but he was sent by Government as a pirate patrol in the Gulf, and that his vessel was the Bride of the Wind."

"You surprise me still more, Mr. Fairfax; but, rest assured that I shall never refuse your hospitality, should I come near your charming home, and I shall make it my business to hunt down this double of mine as soon as I can; but is there no chance of my getting through that island channel, so as to give chase to that pirate pursuer of yours, for I would like to relieve you of all anxiety on his score?"

"He has had too long a start for you to overhaul him now," quickly decided Faustine.

"I can but try, Miss Fairfax, if I could get through the island channel, for I confess to having but an inferior pilot for these waters."

"I will lend you my man, and a better one does not live, Le Roy, if you will return him to me within a couple of weeks."

"Willingly, sir, and reward him handsomely; but, whither are you bound, may I ask?"

"To New Orleans, to get our baggage from the brig, and to make some necessary purchases for the plantation."

"Then I will have your man join you there within the week, if that will do?"

"Certainly, it will be still better, for he can sail us back home, for, though Mr. Avon and myself are good sailors, we prefer to have Leon at the helm."

After a glass of wine together, farewells were said and the party returned to the lugger, and Mr. Fairfax told Leon what he wished him to do.

"Certainly, master," was the ready response.

"And, Leon?"

"Yes, master."

"Find out while you are on board, if Captain Le Roy is not considered a trifle mad—that is, insane?"

"Yes, sir; but how will you go on, sir?"

"We will push right on to New Orleans, taking the open sea way as quickly as we can get there."

"Well, sir, I'll go on board the schooner now," and Leon returned in the boat to the Bride of the Wind, which was again under way and heading for the dangerous channel, before the Arrow got fairly started.

Watching her they saw her disappear in the narrow pass, and the lugger, with a negro sailor at the helm held on her course for the Balize.

It was late before the two maidens could be prevailed upon to leave the deck, and just as they were saying good-night they heard distant firing in the direction in which the Bride of the Wind had sailed.

"Le Roy has overhauled the pirate, and woo be unto him," cried the planter, and all listened as the firing grew heavier and heavier.

Then it ceased altogether, and Faustine and Irene retired to their state-rooms; but they arose early in the morning, and there was an anxiety among one and all during the voyage to New Orleans to know what had been the result of the combat between the two schooners.

As the Arrow reached her anchorage off the city several days after and the party went ashore to go to a hotel during their stay, they started with amazement as they beheld Leon awaiting them.

"Well, Leon, did you drop from the clouds?" the planter asked eagerly, as he grasped the hand of the pilot.

"No, sir; Captain Le Roy landed me on the lake-shore, sir, and I walked across to the city."

"And the Bride of the Wind?"

"Is at sea, master."

"But you met the Bother, for we heard firing?"

"Yes, sir; and had a running fight with her, driving her ashore on a reef and wrecking her."

"And her captain?" quickly asked Faustine, while her voice trembled as she asked the question.

"Is dead, missy, for those of the crew who were not killed or drowned Captain Le Roy took prisoners, and they are on board his schooner."

"And you are sure the captain was killed?" urged Faustine.

"Yes, missy; he went down in the wreck."

Faustine bowed her head, but said no more, and the planter told Leon to go on board and take charge of the lugger, adding:

"I will give you all the money you can spend, Leon, if you come up to the hotel to-night."

"Lor, master, Captain Le Roy gave me gold enough to buy my freedom, sir, if I wanted it," was the reply.

"And Leon," whispered the planter, as the pilot held up his bag of gold for exhibition.

"Yes, master."

"Did you find out what I asked you to try and ascertain?"

"Yes, master; and he ain't any more mad than you or me."

"Indeed!"

And the planter went on after his party, meditating deeply.

As they entered the hotel and the planter and Claude Avon left the young ladies in the parlor while they secured rooms, a man suddenly entered.

Faustine stood at the window gazing out upon the busy street, and turning to speak to Irene she beheld the stranger.

With a moan she sunk upon the floor, for she was face to face with Redfield Romer!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHASE OF THE BOTHER.

HAD the Bride of the Wind not been a remarkably fine working boat, and Leon the best of pilots, large as she was, she could never have made the run back through the channel between the Devil's Chain of islands.

The tide was against her, she had to beat at times dead to windward, and the space was remarkably contracted for a vessel of her length.

Being some thirty feet shorter, and drawing less water, the Bother had been much easier to run through; but Leon knew his duty well, and had a strong hand, an iron nerve and a quick eye.

The young captain of the schooner stood at the helm with Leon, ready to obey the slightest hint of his dusky pilot, and the men were at their posts, moving with quickness whenever an order was given.

It was a perilous run, as all knew who saw the dangers about them, and Captain Le Roy said:

"My man, had I known the peril to my craft and men, I would never have ventured through here; but seeing your skill and pluck, I would make the same run again."

"Thank you, master."

"And, Leon, if your master will let me have you, I will cheerfully purchase you from him, and then give you your freedom, though, of course, I would wish you to remain with me as my pilot."

"Master, I am the same as free now, sir, and I would not leave my master and Missy Faustine on any account."

"Nor would I have you do so, if you would be more happy with them; but now let us look for the pirate."

"Sail ho!" came from the lookout as he uttered the words.

"Whereaway!"

"Close under the land, sir, and off the port bow two points, as the Bride now heads."

"Ay, ay, I have her now," and the captain held his glass for a long time upon the strange sail.

"It is the schooner, Leon, and I hope there is water enough for us to follow him."

"There is, sir; but he has run into a lagoon there to hide, and can pass right on through if he sees that we know where he is."

"See, sir, he has disappeared, and if the lookout had not sighted him as he did, we would not have known where he was, though I should have looked in there, if we could not have seen him in the open."

"And where does that bayou lead him?"

"Right out into open water, sir."

"And this craft can go through?"

"Yes, sir, by towing; but we can drive him out, now we know where he is, by our fire."

"Ah!" and Captain Le Roy asked Leon several other questions, determined to promptly follow his advice, for he saw that he was a thorough pilot.

The spot where the Bother had last been seen was about four miles distant, and crowding on sail the Bride of the Wind went skimming along, parallel with the island chain, and at a speed that won the unbounded admiration of Leon.

"She sails as a bird flies, master," said the dusky pilot, with delight at the movement of the vessel.

"Yes, Leon, she has wooed and won the winds to her sweet will, and is well named," answered Le Roy, with pride in his vessel.

"Now, sir, we can open fire upon her, and, if you will have the helmsman hold her as she is now headed, I will aim the gun, as I know just where to throw a shot, master."

"You shall, Leon."

"Here, quartermaster, take the helm, and the pilot will give you your instructions, so obey

them to the letter, for these waters have reefs lying about in them.

"Come, Leon," and when the half-breed had given his orders to the helmsman, Captain Le Roy led him forward.

"Men, clear this fore-castle gun for action!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered the crew, and a moment after he sung out:

"All ready, sir!"

"Gunner, the pilot will fire the gun, so obey his orders."

"He knows about where to stir up a hornet's nest."

"Yes, sir," and the gunner stepped back, while Leon took his place.

The half-breed put on no airs, spoke with marked respect to the gun's crew, took aim carefully, pointing the muzzle toward an island three-quarters of a mile distant, and fired.

The roar of the huge gun caused a thousand echoes, the iron shot went shrieking away on its errand, and then came a terrific crashing, as it cut its way through the timber, and cries followed its fall.

"You hit the schooner, Leon, by all that's good!"

"Bravo!" shouted Captain Le Roy, while the crew involuntarily broke forth into a cheer at such superb "shooting in the dark."

"I knew where to aim, master," was the modest reply, and the gun was again loaded, aimed and fired.

A like result followed, and Leon said:

"He knows we are after him, master, and he will run out of his hiding-place."

"And what start will he have, Leon?"

"A mile, sir."

"And will we hold on as we are?"

"No, sir; for, as soon as we have passed yonder reef point, master, we will lay to, and I will pepper the island with iron until I drive the pirate out."

"Good!"

And Captain Le Roy gave orders for the men to stand by and lay the schooner to at the command of the pilot, and it was quickly done.

As the schooner's guns were all mounted on pivots, the position of the vessel made no difference, and Leon quickly sighted one, then another and another of the pieces, going quickly to and fro, until he kept up a constant fusillade upon the island.

The result of this was as he had anticipated; the pirate schooner soon appeared at the other end of the bayou and shot out into open water carrying full sail.

Watching this point, the moment her white jib glimmered in the moonlight, Leon called out quickly:

"Now, master, get under way, sir, for there she is."

The crew gave a cheer and sprung to work, the schooner fell off to the wind, and in a minute's time the Bride of the Wind was in chase.

The Bother at once opened fire from her stern gun, and the Bride of the Wind replying, a hot running fight was begun between the two rapidly-speeding vessels.

But steadily the cruiser gained, and what was more, her fire seemed to damage the Bother greatly, as her fore-topmast was cut away, she half broached to at one time, and the iron was heard to crash through her hull at different times.

"Master, he's going to wreck his craft and take to the boats, hoping to get away in them among yonder islands," said Leon.

"How do you know this, my man?"

"He is heading directly for a reef, sir, and if you'd give him a broadside or two you might damage his boats so he could not use them."

"With our pivots, Leon, we can change her course a few points and bring them all to bear and not lose time, so we will do so."

The order was quickly given, the Bride of the Wind was pointed in a quartering position to the chase, and the entire battery opened heavily.

The result was that the guns of the Bother were silenced very quickly, and a few moments after she struck heavily upon a reef, her mast going down under the shock.

"Keep up the fire!" shouted Captain Le Roy, "and drive them to shelter!"

This was done, and then the cruiser, approaching as near as she dared to the reef, boats were lowered and sent to the wreck, from whence had come a hail:

"Ho the cruiser!"

"Ahoy the wreck!"

"Cease firing, for we surrender."

"Do not attempt to leave in your boats, or I shall open fire."

"Ay, ay, sir, we will not."

The boats of the cruiser were then sent to the wreck, and the vessel was found to have been terribly cut up by the fire of the Bride of the Wind.

Captain Le Roy had himself gone, taking Leon in the boat with him, and he beheld only about thirty men to surrender.

"You have killed and wounded the balance of our crew, sir," said a seaman.

"And your commander?"

"He is dead, sir."

"Where is his body?"

"He was knocked into the sea as he stood on the bulwark, sir."

"And your other officers?"

"We had only the captain as commissioned officer, sir."

"All right; your vessel's booty is my prize, and you go on board of my craft as prisoners."

"What pirate craft is yours, sir?"

Le Roy seemed taken aback by the question; but he replied:

"We have just captured the pirate craft, my men."

"We are no pirates, sir."

"What are you then?"

"Our captain was a gentleman of wealth, a South Carolina planter, and this was his pleasure cruiser."

"Ah! well I saw you chasing and firing upon a planter's yacht, and I shall hold you to prove your words," was the response, and after the burial of the dead and removal of the booty and provisions, the Bride of the Wind headed away for the shore of Lake Borgne, at a point near the city of New Orleans, where Leon was richly rewarded by Fred Le Roy and sent to rejoin his master, and to tell Faustine from the captain of the Wind that her pirate lover was dead.

That Leon fulfilled his mission, and that Redfield Romer was not dead, the reader has already seen.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OUTLAW'S RUSE.

I WILL now return to Redfield Romer, after his having set Faustine adrift in the life-boat, that he might, through the cruiser's stopping to pick her up, gain time and save his own vessel.

He held on to his canvas, in the face of the storm sweeping down upon him, that he might place as great a distance as possible between him and his pursuer when the storm should strike him.

His men grew a trifle anxious, as the tempest approached, and still their captain gave them no order to strip the schooner.

Did the storm strike them as they then were, they knew it would pitch the vessel bottom up.

The canvas then set caused the Bother to reel far over, running her rail under at times.

But still her daring captain held on, and, only in the last moment came his order:

"Strip her to bare poles, and do it lively for your lives!"

The men were worked up to a fit of terror, and they did spring for their lives, and never before had the schooner been stripped of her canvas in so short a time.

"I knew you could do it, lads!"

"Down all!" shouted the Outlawed Cadet, and the storm was upon them.

The instant the first blow was over, a storm-sail was set forward and the schooner went flying away before the gale.

In this way, as Captain Le Roy had surmised, she had gotten out of sight in a very short while.

Into the inner waters of the Gulf, as soon as the storm was over, Redfield Romer then headed his vessel.

He had by no means given up his intention of carrying off Faustine Fairfax.

He loved her with all the intensity of his nature, and he determined that she should be his wife, or die.

No other man should ever claim her.

Did she give her pledge to marry him, he would take her at once to some fort, secure the services of a clergyman, and after she was his wife, he would be content to give up his wild, sinful life, and devote himself and his time to making her happy.

Without her life was a void to him.

Such was his thought, and such his plans.

He had, after flying from justice, gone to the Gulf, and, as people had surmised, allied himself with a lawless set of men.

His sea skill, his indomitable pluck and determined to rule manner, had rapidly gained him the ascendancy over the ignorant men he had to deal with, and it was not long before half of the band of freebooters sided with him.

Their chief was a young man also, and had once been an officer in the Spanish navy.

From a lagoon pirate he had become commander of a schooner, the fleetest craft in the Gulf waters.

Redfield Romer had sighed to be the commander of this vessel, and not an under officer as he was, and one day the trusted friend of the pirate chief had told the Outlawed Cadet a secret, upon condition that he should be second in command of another vessel.

This secret was that the young chief had another schooner built, the exact counterpart of the one he then sailed in, that he might have it to fall back upon in case of accident to his fleet craft.

That vessel was then in Pensacola, and ready for sea, or would be in a few days, all except her guns, which were ordered in Boston, where she was to go for them.

A hint to Redfield Romer was sufficient, and his plans were quickly formed, and that night he left the pirate rendezvous, in the absence in New Orleans of the chief, with half the band who had come over to his side.

An old fishing-smack served him for a means of transportation, and pressing her hard under all canvas, he ran into the harbor of Pensacola at night, saw the builder of the new schooner, said that he had been sent by Captain Isola, the name of the young pirate chief, to get the vessel, and sailed away in her.

Boldly he put into New Orleans with her, as a trader, and with one object in view was storing her, when he saw on the streets Duncan Fairfax, the planter.

The planter did not recognize him, and dogging his steps, he found that he was to sail in the packet-ship Dauntless for New York.

As Romer's plan was to go and see Faustine, to implore her to fly with him, he saw that he must act promptly, and he believed that she still loved him, such was his overpowering vanity, in spite of the fact that he was a fugitive from the gallows and had led a very evil life.

Finding when the Dauntless was to sail, he got off before her, met her off the Balize and dogged her to New York Harbor, trying his vessel's speed against a clipper that he knew was noted for her fleetness.

The result of his run there the reader knows, as also that he became bitterly revengeful when he was defied by the woman he so madly loved.

Attempting to carry Faustine off by force, she had so well defended herself that, but for a stiletto in his breast-pocket, she would have killed him, as the bullet of her pistol flattened upon the blade, and directly over his wicked heart.

The shock caused him to stagger backward, and for a moment he believed he had received his death-wound; but, finding how miraculous had been his escape, and knowing that the alarm was given, he at once returned to his vessel, and, getting under way, stood up past the city and through the Sound for Boston.

Sending a spy to New York, he ascertained when the planter was to leave for the South with his daughter, and, likewise, by what vessel.

Then he secretly armed the Bother, and lying in wait for the sailing of the Gulf Queen, hung in her wake until she reached the Gulf.

The capture of Faustine the reader has seen, and the refusing to take the gold carried by the Gulf Queen, was to cause the maiden to believe him honest, and that his only motive was to secure her.

Having gained his vessel through the treachery of one of Isola the Freebooter's officers, on condition that he should make him his second lieutenant, Romer instantly broke faith with him when he had possession of the schooner, and told him that he allowed no officers on board above the rank of a boatswain, and this position he could have if he wished it, but if not he could go as a common seaman.

The man was a Spaniard, and a cunning one.

So he took the berth of boatswain with every indication that he was pleased, and nursed his revenge until an opportunity should occur to strike at his treacherous commander.

To the surprise of this man, Montez the boatswain, and of the crew, after the storm and the escape from the Bride of the Wind, Captain Romer coolly ordered the helmsman to head for the retreat of Isola, the Freebooter, the chief whose vessel he had stolen.

But the crew had, one and all, been too well disciplined by their cruel young captain to demur, and so the Bother went on her course for the island retreat of the outlaws, the men very confident in their own minds that there was warm work ahead, for they knew Captain Isola, and they knew Redfield Romer as well.

As for Boatswain Lola, he was in a quandary as to whether it was best to kill Captain Romer there and take command of the schooner, or wait and let him and Isola kill each other, and thus he become the commander of a fleet.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FREEBOOTERS' HOME.

THE retreat of the Gulf Freebooters was in the bayou, in the islands, from whence the fire of Leon from the Bride of the Wind had driven the outlaw craft.

The bayou ran back from a cove, into the depths of a small island, near the center of which was a lake, or basin several acres in size.

There was a bayou-like exit from this lake to open water beyond, and it thus gave the buccaners an escaping point in case of attack.

The vessels, after entering the cove, had to take in all sail and tow into the lake with their boats.

To get out they could be drawn along by the overhanging foliage by their crews standing upon their decks.

The lake was deep, and cypress and other trees fringed its banks, the branches being festooned with Spanish moss, which completely shut it in as though by a wall.

A more dismal, unhealthy place could not be imagined, for only at noonday did the rays of the sun touch the waters of the lake, and alligators, snakes and smaller reptiles were numerous.

Wild fowl made it their retreat also, and altogether it was not a place where an honest man would care to make his home.

The trees grew to such a height around the lake shores that the topmasts of a vessel could not be seen by a passing cruiser outside, while the place was known to but few of the Gulf fishermen, no one suspecting that the island was split in twain and had a sheet of sluggish water within its depths.

To guard against surprise, a rope was stretched across the entrance and exit of the lake, so that a boat entering would strike it and ring a bell which was attached to a buoy near which the pirate schooner anchored when in hiding there.

Thus those on board the Bother knew, and therefore, when the schooner headed in toward the inlet, one rainy night, a boat was landed, and two men were sent ahead to detach the rope, so that the bell would not ring and thus give the alarm.

This being done the Bother moved into the bayou, towed by two boats with muffled oars.

Safely the schooner passed through the bayou, and was then warped broadside across it, her guns commanding the vessel of Captain Isola, which was visible, by her lights, a cable's length distant at anchor.

The night was very dark, and as it was pouring rain, the Bother showing no light, it was not likely that she would be discovered.

Upon the sea side of the island was a camp, where the half-dozen men constantly kept on the island, as a guard for the booty, were wont to remain, the sea breezes preventing their dying with malarial fever, as they would have done, did they stay on the little fishing smack in the lake, and which was kept loaded with the plunder, ready to escape should danger threaten.

As Captain Isola never kept the men there longer than two or three weeks at a time, and kept changing the guard from his crew, they were enabled to stand its sickening influences.

At stated times the pirate schooner was wont to visit the island, to deposit her booty, refit and give the men a rest, and she then anchored in the lake, as stated; but the captain never remained longer than a week at a time.

As Redfield Romer knew about the time that Captain Isola would be in the retreat, if he was not at sea hunting for him and his lost schooner, he chose his time well, and was glad to see that his rival was there.

"I will give him a surprise when the dawn breaks," he muttered, as he ordered the crew to turn in out of the pelting rain, while he himself stood guard.

Thus the hours dragged away until dawn, the anxious men wondering what their captain meant to do, yet not daring to question him.

As for Lola, the boatswain, he abided his time, feeling assured of life if Romer was the victor in a combat, and of death if Isola triumphed, while he hoped that both would be slain and he would then proclaim himself chief.

With the first glimmer of dawn Romer called his men on deck and to their posts.

Then, when all was in readiness, he shouted in thunder tones:

"Ahoy! the Sea Nettle!"

A wild scene of confusion was seen upon the Sea Nettle, and the crew poured from below in dire dismay.

There they beheld the counterpart of their vessel lying across the bayou entrance, in a position to rake them fore and aft, and the men at their quarters.

It certainly was a surprise, and all eyes were turned upon Captain Isola as he came on deck livid with dread, for he knew not what evil he had to face.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RIVAL CAPTAINS.

"AHoy, Captain Isola! it is I, Redfield, your former lieutenant!"

The words came in threatening tones across the still waters of the lake.

The rain had ceased, the sky was clearing, and ere long the sun would rise out of the Gulf, but not to penetrate that dismal spot.

Back from the Sea Nettle came the reply:

"Then you are the man I seek, traitor."

A silence of an instant and then Romer replied:

"Captain Isola, my men are at their guns, and I am in a position to rake your craft from stem to stern, or to sink her."

"But I do not wish this, and I have a proposition to make to you."

"What would you say, Sir Traitor?"

"I would say that I am willing to meet you in mortal combat for the supremacy of this band, for the survivor shall be the chief."

"What say you, Isola?"

"Gladly."

"We will row to the deck of yonder lugger."

And he pointed to the booty craft that was at anchor in one part of the lake.

"And what then?" called out Captain Isola.

"If you prefer pistols, we can advance on different sides of the boat, you on the starboard,

I to port, and open fire as we spring on board."

"And if the weapons are swords?"

"We can board in the same way, meet amidships and fight it out."

"Let it be swords, then."

"Agreed; but we are to leave our crews on board our vessels, excepting one man, who is to row us to the lugger."

"I am content, Sir Traitor."

"And the victor rules the Freebooters of the Gulf?"

"Yes."

"Then select your man, get into your boat, and have him row you to the starboard side of the lugger."

"Lola, you are to accompany me," said Romer, turning to the Spanish boatswain.

The face of Lola changed, for he had his own little plot all arranged—to note who was the victor and then, making him a prisoner, to proclaim himself commander.

But the order of Romer broke up his little clever scheme, and he dared not disobey, so, with a muttered curse, he got into the gig alongside and took the oars.

Romer seated himself in the stern, a handsome sword in his hand, and the gig left the Bother at the same moment that a boat pushed off from the Sea Nettle's side, containing Captain Isola and an oarsman.

The crews of the two vessels stood eagerly watching the departing boats, both schooners being about the same distance from the lugger, which, as her stern was toward them, would enable all to see the meeting and the duel.

That each captain suspected the other of treachery was evident, for their eyes took in every movement of the other.

The oarsmen pulled an even stroke, and the boats touched the lugger at the same moment.

"Here, Lola, take this piece of chalk, spring on board and mark out the places for both of us to stand," said Romer, quietly.

The boatswain took the chalk, sprung on the deck of the lugger, just as the sharp report of a pistol was heard, and staggering backward he fell heavily.

At the same moment Romer leaped on the deck, while he cried:

"I expected just such treachery from you, Captain Isola, so made that dangerous fellow there my dupe, and he got the bullet intended for me."

The Spaniard was livid with rage, for he had played a bold card and lost, for, crouching in his boat, he had fired the moment that Lola had touched the deck, not observing in the hasty glance he had that it was not Redfield Romer.

He had only his sword now, and suspecting that his rival was armed with a pistol, he supposed he would kill him, so rushed furiously upon him.

But Romer did not draw a pistol, and calmly met the attack, the swords crossing with a vicious ring that made the crews of the separate schooners start, for they supposed one of the captains must have fallen in the first rush.

Both were superb swordsmen, and strong men withal, so the combat became fierce in the extreme.

But the American was calm, where the Spaniard was excited, and thus he held the advantage in that respect.

Across the lugger, from port to starboard and back again, and then from stem to stern, they fought, the crews gazing on with intense interest.

In the port scuppers lay Lola the boatswain, but he was not dead.

The bullet had been well-aimed, but glanced on his frontal bone, leaving an ugly-looking wound, but one that was not dangerous.

It had stunned him for an instant, felling him to the deck heavily; but after a few seconds the bleeding revived him, and the dazed feeling passed off, so that he could see and understand all that was going on.

Still he did not rise from his prostrate position, but, with his fierce black eyes wide open, gazed with interest upon the combat between the rival captains.

He had not heard the words of Romer, regarding his using him as a dupe, so supposed that Captain Isola had shot him purposely, for the treacherous part he had played toward him, in getting the schooner for the American.

Thus he lay, watching the combat closely, and abiding the result with the deepest anxiety.

"This wound is but a trifle, though it will leave an ugly scar," he muttered, as he passed his hand across the gash in his forehead torn by Isola's bullet, and this seemed to console him, though he knew his life was in the balance until he knew which would be the victor.

In the mean time, fighting furiously, each combatant had begun to feel the fearful strain; but Romer possessed the greater endurance, kept his nerve, and was a trifle the better swordsman, which was saying a great deal, as Captain Isola was a master with the blade.

Seeing that he held the advantage, Redfield Romer pushed his adversary harder, broke down his guard and drove his sword into his heart, while he cried:

"Now I rule here!"

The men all heard his words, and his crew on the *Bother* broke forth with a cheer; but the crew of the *Sea Nettle* remained silent.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MUTINY.

THE moment that he had seen Captain Isola fall and uttered the words in a ringing voice, that he ruled the Gulf Freebooters, Redfield Romer turned to Lola, the boatswain, who still lay where he had fallen.

"Come, Boatswain Lola, you are not seriously hurt, I am glad to see, so do not lie there, but get up and aid me, for I need you."

Lola was upon his feet in an instant, and binding a silk scarf about his head, he said:

"No, Captain Romer, I am not much hurt, though Isola meant to kill me."

"Yes; he thought to kill me, fearing to meet me in sword combat, and I, suspecting him of just such treachery, got you to jump on board," was the cool confession.

At it Lola's face changed, for he saw how he had been made use of, and very nearly at the cost of his life; but he was too circumspect to show his feelings of hatred and indignation then, for his revenge could wait, so he said:

"A clever ruse, Captain Romer, on your part, but a very close shave for me; but how can I serve you, sir?"

"Go with me on board the *Sea Nettle*."

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Do you fear to meet Isola's lieutenants, for they may be ugly, as I notice all are silent on board?"

"How meet them, señor?"

"Fight them."

"In single combat?"

"Yes."

"I am not in condition just now, Señor Captain, being a trifle shaky from this wound; but—"

"If they will kindly await your pleasure you will oblige them," sneered Romer, and he continued:

"But I will meet them, and if they refuse my terms they must fight, that is all."

"Come!"

He sprang into the boat in which sat the oarsman who had rowed Isola on board the lugger, and said sternly:

"Pull for the schooner, sir."

"Which schooner, my captain?" asked the frightened man.

"The *Sea Nettle*."

The man obeyed, and as the boat approached Redfield saw that there was some cause for excitement on board, so he said shortly:

"Way 'nough!"

The man ceased rowing, and Romer called out:

"Ho, the *Sea Nettle*!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered a voice, and a young Spaniard jumped upon the bulwark and was recognized as one of Captain Isola's lieutenants.

"Do you mean treachery on board that craft?" thundered Romer.

"To whom, señor?"

"To me, sir."

"This was Captain Isola's schooner, and I was his senior officer, but now am in command," was the response.

"The agreement between Captain Isola and myself, señor, was that the victor of the duel between us should command both vessels," said Romer, with strange calmness.

"That may have been his agreement alive; but he being dead, I now command, and I shall continue to do so."

Quick as a flash the right hand of Redfield Romer was thrown forward, a sharp report followed, the arms of the officer were thrown upward, as he wildly grasped at the air, and then, with a plunge, he fell into the waters of the lake.

When the crew of the *Sea Nettle* had recovered from their surprise, the gig had disappeared behind the hull of the *Bother*, and the daring outlaw captain was safe upon his own deck.

Springing to a gun, he trained it quickly upon the schooner, while he shouted:

"Do you dare brave me longer, you mutineer dogs?"

With cries of alarm the crew threw themselves upon the deck on their faces, others sprang behind the guns, and a few darted down into the steerage and cabin.

A cheer broke from the men on the *Bother*, for they saw that their comrades on the *Sea Nettle* were thoroughly cowed.

Springing again into his boat, accompanied by Lola, and with the same oarsman, Romer rowed rapidly to the *Sea Nettle* and leaped upon her decks, a pistol in one hand, his stained sword in the other.

"Who here resists my authority?" he said, sternly.

Not a word was spoken in reply, and he shouted:

"Sea Nettles, to your quarters!"

With a rush the men sprang to their posts, appearing from their separate hiding-places, glad to have the spell thus broken, for they had

expected the broadsides of the *Bother* to be turned upon them.

"So you resist my claim to rule here, señor?" and Romer turned upon the junior lieutenant, who stood near, white-faced and the picture of fright.

He had been the one to urge his senior on to resistance, to assume command, that he might step up a round of the ladder of promotion; but the burning eyes of the American now were upon him, and he said quickly:

"I am only too willing, Captain Redfield, to acknowledge you as chief."

"Then go on board of my vessel as boatswain, while you, Lola, take command of this schooner."

The Spanish lieutenant was dismayed, but he dared not disobey, and bowed acquiescence, while his men chuckled at his discomfiture.

Lola was correspondingly delighted, and bowed most graciously, while he said obsequiously:

"I obey your commands, worthy captain."

The two schooners were then brought side by side, and the striking resemblance between them was noted by one and all.

Their hulls were on the same model, with a few exceptions in favor of the *Bother*, her bows being sharper.

Then their rigging was alike, though the *Bother* spread a few more square feet in each sail she set.

Having closely examined the two vessels and their slight differences, Redfield Romer decided upon the *Bother* as the fleetest and best craft, but ordered a test to be at once made, and the pretty schooners were dragged out of the bayou into open water.

Then their sails were set, and for hours they were tested upon the different points of sailing, the *Bother* in each instance gaining the lead of the *Sea Nettle*.

With a three-knot breeze at noonday, it increased to half a gale toward night, while an ugly sea arose, and gave both schooners a thorough test of their stanch qualities and speed, and Captain Romer signaled to stand back for the rendezvous, with the remark:

"The *Sea Nettle* is a splendid craft, stanch as a line-of-battle ship, fleet as the wind, blow it light or heavy; but the *Bother* is her superior in every respect."

Once back in the lake Captain Romer picked from the *Sea Nettle* her best men, sending a few of those on the *Bother* that he did not like to replace them.

Then he transferred the booty from Captain Isola's cabin to his own, and the Señor Lola began to look quite blue when he saw that the *Bother* was being put in splendid trim, and fully manned at the expense of the *Sea Nettle*; but the Spaniard was too cunning to express his views upon the matter, and so wisely held his peace.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FATAL FOIL.

NOT caring to remain in the miasmatic air of the lake while the schooners were being fitted out, or rather the *Bother* was being fitted out at the expense of the *Sea Nettle*, the Outlawed Cadet went over on the sandy seashore, and pitched a camp among the dwarf pines that grew there.

It was while reclining there one night, congratulating himself upon being able to put to sea when he wished, for the *Bother* was all ready, and smoking a cigar, that he suddenly heard a voice break forth in song.

He had been so lost in reverie that he had not noticed a sail not far distant gliding by the island, and hearing the voice, he knew from whence it came the moment that his eyes fell upon the vessel.

But there was that in the voice and song that caused him to spring from his hammock as though one of the island serpents had stung him.

"I know that song," he said, in a low tone.

"And I know that voice, for there is but one like it to me in all the world," he continued.

"Yes, she is on that vessel, and it is evidently one of those plantation half-pleasure craft, half-lugger that belong to these plantations on the Gulf."

He stood listening to the voice as it swelled in harmony over the waters, and then, under the impulse of the moment, as the notes died away, he broke forth with the song:

"Come o'er the sea,
Maiden, with me."

Into the words and music he threw all the pathos and expression he could use, and his voice was truly a fine one.

When he saw the lugger gliding on, and no more singing was heard across the waters, he again raised his voice in song, selecting this time a favorite ballad of Faustine's, and one he had often sung to her when neither had ever dreamed that the brand of piracy was upon him.

It was "The Pirate's Serenade," and with his whole soul he sung the words, commencing:

"My boat's by the shore, my barque's on the bay,
And both must be gone ere the dawn of the day."

No answer came to his song, and he said sadly:

"She recognized my voice as I did hers, and she gives me no response."

"Oh, Faustine! could I but undo the guilty past, how gladly would I do so."

"But the die is cast, and I must go on as I have begun."

"I was tempted to sin and I yielded."

"I was infatuated with cards and I gambled."

"I loved wine and it has mastered me."

"I am the slave of circumstances, the child of misfortune."

"Could I win you I would be a different man."

"Should I lose you, then life holds no charm, and my nature would find vent alone in evil deeds."

"But I will not lose you, for I will make every effort to make you mine."

"Once you are mine, and I will prove to you my love."

"Once you are mine my whole life shall change."

"Now to get possession of you, force you to become my wife, and then devote myself to winning your forgiveness."

He sprang to his feet as he spoke, and following the path cut through to the lake, was soon on board of his vessel.

"Señor Lola, remain here with your vessel until my return, for I put to sea at once," he said.

Then the *Bother* was warped out of the lake, her white sails were spread, her enlarged crew sprung to their posts of duty, and the fleet schooner started in chase of the *Arrow*, as the reader has seen.

To force the lugger to come to, not knowing who was her commander or crew, Romer fired several shots over her.

But they had no effect, as regarded their purpose, and so he pressed on in chase.

"She is going to attempt the channel, sir, between the Devil's Chain," said an old seaman, coming aft, and saluting politely.

"Well, my man, what will that benefit her?"

"She will gain half a dozen miles on us, sir, unless we follow her through."

"I have heard that the channel was a desperate one to attempt, my man."

"It is a bad one, sir."

"Do you know the way through?"

"I am one of the very few that do, sir, for I fished along the Devil's Chain for years."

"Take the helm and follow that craft, sir."

The old sailor stepped promptly to the wheel.

"If you go through all right I'll give you six months' pay; but if you touch a rock, I shall blow your brains out as an absolving act to Satan for your sending me to him."

The old sailor never winced, but said:

"If I strike, sir, your death, and that of all of us, would follow quickly on mine, for the sea is seething through the channel to-night, with this high tide, and the wind makes it very choppy there."

"But you can go through?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then to your work," and Redfield turned away with an air of utter indifference, though not a movement of the old pilot escaped his eagle-like eyes.

The lugger, under the pilotage of Leon, had already disappeared in the channel-cut, and the *Bother* followed her soon after.

Without the tremor of a muscle the old pilot held on his way, though Captain Redfield stood by his side, a pistol in his hand, to carry out his threat.

The *Bother* worked to a charm, however, and soon cast all dangers astern as she shot out into the open water; but no, not all dangers, for it was not long before the Bride of the Wind came flying out of the land shadows, and recognizing his old enemy, and knowing her wonderful speed, Captain Redfield at once gave the order to put about and stand back for the dreaded channel.

"You can go back, my man?" he said, calling the old pilot from forward, whither he had gone after running the schooner safely through.

"Yes, sir, but with this wind and tide the dangers are far greater."

"A year's pay to do it in safety, the same alternative if you do not," was the curt reply.

"I will win my year's pay, Captain Redfield; but the danger is as great as though you risked an engagement with yonder large schooner."

"I shall not risk the engagement, sir, but I will the channel, so take your helm."

A moment after Redfield called the men to the guns and opened on the schooner, which he bitterly imprecated for again foiling him in getting possession of Faustine Fairfax.

"I shall arm and man the schooner more heavily, and give that fellow a surprise some day," he said through his shut teeth, as he watched his vessel nearing the channel.

All on board held their breath as the *Bother* plunged into the work cut out for her, and a sigh of relief arose as she made the run in safety and went flying along, Redfield congratulating himself upon having cleverly dropped his foe.

"Do you think she can come through, pilot?" he asked.

"She might, sir, but it would be a bold man that would attempt to put so large a craft through, especially with the wind and tide as it now is."

"Would you attempt it?"

"Hardly, sir, and certainly not under a promise of success."

"Then we have cast the cruiser off the track, and I'll let the lugger go to-night, but watch for her return, and then—"

He did not complete his sentence aloud, and began to pace to and fro, a cigar between his lips.

So he continued, lost in deep reverie and regardless of the beauty of the wild moonlit scene about him, until a startled cry came:

"Sail ho!"

It was the old pilot that gave the cry, for he had been attentively watching the dark shore, back where the Channel of Death was.

Suddenly he had seen something white revealed against the dark background of foliage, and he knew that it was a vessel.

Perhaps it was the lugger, for he did not believe it possible that it could be the large cruiser.

So he uttered the alarm.

Instantly Redfield was by his side, his glass in hand.

"Whereaway, old man?"

"There, sir, almost dead astern, and she has come out of the channel, though it can hardly be the schooner."

"It is the schooner! The man at her helm is a bolder pilot than you are, old man."

"He is indeed, sir, and she is searching for us."

"Then run into the bayou, and thence into the lake."

"The man who knows the secret channel, as does the one at yonder schooner's helm, is well aware of the bayou way to the lake, Captain Redfield."

"Ah! say you so, old man?" somewhat anxiously asked Redfield.

"Yes, sir."

"Can the schooner enter the lake?"

"I do not know how much water she draws, but I think she can."

"And will do so, think you?"

"If her commander is a plucky man, on the hunt for big game."

"He is."

"Well, sir, you might run into the lake and put a boat at either end, so as to see if the schooner enters, and if so you can slip out one end as she goes in the other, and it will give you a good lead."

"We have two schooners and a lugger there, you know."

"Yes, sir."

"And I wish all to escape."

"True, captain."

It was evident that the old man was in a quandary, for he remained silent.

At length Redfield said:

"If yonder schooner comes in through the bayou and sends her boats in by the inlet, we will be caught like a wolf in his den and have no escape, old man."

"True, sir."

"I shall try another plan."

"Yes, captain."

"Head for the bayou."

And Redfield lighted a cigar, as though he had made up his mind to a plan that would save his vessels.

Into the bayou then glided the Bother, and she was towed on to the lake and then to the further inlet.

Here she came to a standstill, and springing into a boat Redfield rowed to the Sea Nettle.

"Lola," he said, as he sprang on deck.

"Yes, Señor Captain."

"I wish you to get your schooner under way, push out into open water and press on with all speed to the inlet on the Florida coast, where I put in some days ago, and there wait until I join you."

"Yes, Señor Captain," said Lola, inwardly congratulating himself that he had an opportunity to get out from under his commander's fierce eyes, but keeping very mum about it having been his intention to slip off that night before the Bother's return, and also about the fact that no island on the Florida coast, or Captain Redfield, either, would see him, once he got out of reach of the Outlawed Cadet.

The Señor Lola had just begun to move his schooner across the lake when the deep boom of a heavy gun was heard followed by the rushing sound of the flying shot, and next came the crashing of the limbs as it cut its way through and fell among a group of cowering seamen upon the Sea Nettle's deck.

A wild cry of fright followed by shrieks of pain succeeded the falling of the shot, the seamen seeming to think that it had fallen from the clouds.

"Quick! get that schooner to sea!" shouted Redfield from his boat.

And the Sea Nettle was quickly pulled into the outlet between the trees.

But the shots fell thick and fast, some into

the lake, one crashing into the the booty lugger, and another seeming to hunt out the Sea Nettle, for it tore the yawl to splinters that hung on the port davits.

"Curse him! will he never get to sea?" cried Redfield, anxiously.

But Señor Lola was doing his best, and was wondering why Captain Redfield was so bravely remaining behind to meet the attack upon the secret retreat, for he little dreamed that he, his vessel and crew were being put up as a sacrifice to save the Bother from destruction and her commander from the yard-arm.

Gaining the inlet Lola spread sail upon the Sea Nettle and went swiftly flying away from the island.

But it was not long before he found that he had a bloodhound on his track.

A cry arose from the crew when the Bride of the Wind was sighted, in hot chase, and the Sea Nettle was literally covered with canvas, until she appeared like a white cloud flying over the moonlit waters.

But the Bride of the Wind came rapidly on, gaining steadily, and then began a running fight, which damaged the Sea Nettle greatly, and losing his nerve under the iron hail, and seeing his men fall about him, the poor Spaniard, who had sought the honor of command, headed the splendid vessel upon a reef to wreck her, and escape in his boats with the men who were able to accompany him.

Half an hour after this desperate determination, he was a prisoner on board the Bride of the Wind, while the pretty Sea Nettle was a wreck upon the rocks.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RECOGNITION.

SATISFIED with his clever ruse to sacrifice the Sea Nettle, and thereby save the Bother and the booty lugger, Captain Redfield still did not intend to content himself there in the retreat.

He knew that the cruiser must soon overtake or sink the Sea Nettle, and he felt assured, if Lola was not killed, and taken prisoner, he would reap his revenge upon him for the trick which he must know had been played him, and in what better way could he do so than to lead his foes upon him, and by so doing save his own life for the betrayal of the retreat.

So Redfield ordered the schooner and the lugger to come to the mouth of the inlet, and he went on ahead in a boat, and watched the hot chase of the cruiser after the Sea Nettle.

"I hate to see the pretty craft sacrificed; but there is no alternative," he muttered, and the vessels coming out of the bayou, he went on board his schooner and set sail, shaping his course for the Balize.

The lugger, under full sail, was barely able to keep up with the schooner under simply her lower sails, and the helmsman of the Bother had orders to remain near the other craft.

As the Arrow had taken matters leisurely, after parting with the Bride of the Wind, Captain Redfield was enabled to gain a good lead of her, and seeking, under the guidance of Pilot Frank, the old seaman who had run him through the Devil's Chain, a secure hiding-place on the coast, the Outlawed Cadet left his schooner there, and boarding the lugger headed her for the mouth of the Mississippi River, leaving the old pilot in charge of the Bother, for he felt that he could trust him.

With the disguise of an ordinary coasting skipper, and half a dozen picked men, Redfield ran the lugger up to New Orleans and anchored, intending to sell the booty that night to a man whom he knew who traded in piratical plunder.

Going to the best hotel he soon appeared in a citizen's suit that he had carried with him, from the Bother, and passing the parlor door he suddenly beheld the well-known form of Faustine Fairfax standing by the window.

He started, his face flushing with pleasure, and he walked quickly toward her, in his excitement not observing that another person was present.

Then it was that Faustine turned, and finding herself face to face with Redfield Romer, sunk fainting to the floor, wholly overcome by the shock of his sudden and unexpected appearance, when, from Leon's story, she surely believed him dead, and her thoughts were of him at that moment.

"Ah, lady, your friend seems to be ill," said Redfield, as with a cry of alarm Irene Avon sprang to the side of Faustine.

"Oh, what can have caused it?"

"Speak, Faustine! speak to me!" cried Irene.

"Permit me to place her upon the sofa, and then I will go for assistance."

"It is but a faint, and she will soon recover," and Redfield raised her gently in his arms, bore her to the sofa, and quickly left the parlor, bowing low at Irene's words:

"Oh, sir, you are so very kind."

Calling to a servant Redfield told him to send assistance to the parlor, and then he sought his own room, remarking to himself:

"I cannot stay here, for though Planter Fairfax might not recognize me as Redfield Romer, he certainly would not forget my face as the

kidnapper of his daughter from the Gulf Queen."

"Yes, I must go to other quarters."

Paying his bill he sought secluded rooms elsewhere, and then sauntered forth to visit the man whom he had heard of as the purchaser of pirate booty.

He found the place, and a sharp-eyed, hard-faced man greeted him.

It was a shop where there seemed to be on sale almost any article a man or woman could wish for, and if each thing there had its history of woe, suffering and death, the man who owned the "curiosity shop" looked the very one to rejoice in the fact, so long as it brought gold into his purse.

"Are you the Señor Casandra?" asked Redfield.

"I am; who are you?" was the blunt response.

"Do you know Captain Isola?"

"Yes; but you are not Isola."

"No, I was his lieutenant."

"Ah!"

"Yes, and I know that you were the purchaser of his cargoes."

"Did he send you to me?"

"No."

"Who did?"

"I came of my own accord, as I have a cargo to dispose of."

"Where is Captain Isola?"

"Dead."

"Dead! Do you mean it?"

"I do."

"You are sure?"

"I killed him, so I ought to know," was the cool response.

The man, hardened as he was, started at this and said:

"You killed him?"

"Yes."

"And you make this confession to me?"

"Oh, yes, for I do not fear even a snake when I have my foot on his neck."

The man gazed at him in amazement, for he understood him, and said:

"You are a bold talker, young man."

"I do not mince words with a rascal."

"Have a care."

"Of what?"

"You might go too far."

"Bah! I did not come here to quarrel with you, Casandra, but to sell pirate plunder to you."

"You are frank, at least."

"Emulate my example then, and tell me how to deliver it to you."

"So Isola is dead?"

"I told you so."

"You are more of a man than he was, though I liked him."

"Had I not been, he would have killed me."

"He owed me money."

"That is not my affair."

"You will pay it for him, to absolve you of his murder."

"Nonsense, I pay no dead men's debts."

Again Señor Casandra looked fixedly at the young sailor, and then asked:

"What is your name?"

"Redfield."

"What have you to sell me?"

"Everything, I suppose, for it is plunder with a few gems and some jewelry I fell heir to, as the successor of Captain Isola."

"You are the coldest-blooded man I ever saw, Captain Redfield."

"You but see your image reflected in my fate, señor; but a truce to nonsense."

"Do you want the booty?"

"Yes, you can come here to-night at nine, and I will go with you and show you where to deliver it."

"All right; but can you give me a good disguise of some kind?"

"Any kind you wish, captain; come in and look them over," and the man led the way into an inner room of his old shop.

Half an hour afterward it would have taken keen eyes indeed to recognize in the clerical-looking gentleman, with gold spectacles and high hat, the commander of the Bother.

Having thus disguised himself he put it to the test by going on board the lugger, pretending to search for a wayward boy who had run away, and he saw that not one of his men suspected his identity.

"I think I can risk the hotel now and be near her, and I will," he muttered, and back to the hotel he went once more, found by glancing over the register, the names he sought, and asked for a room near the one occupied by Faustine, by casually requesting them to give him such a number.

"Your name, please!" said the landlord.

"Ah, yes, my brother, I forgot to register," and he wrote in a disguised hand, near his own name written the day before:

"REV. JOSIAH ALLEN JENES,

"Boston, Mass."

Going to his room he reviewed himself once more in the glass, and apparently thoroughly satisfied with his disguise, sauntered downstairs.

Hearing voices in the parlor he entered.

Faustine was there, also Irene, and Claude Avon lolled upon a sofa, but rose as the supposed clergyman entered, and the maidens half-inclined their heads.

Faustine was looking pale and wan, and he saw that her sufferings through him were beginning to tell upon her.

"Pardon me, my friends, for disturbing you; but I expected to meet a reverend brother here," he said.

"No one has been here the past hour, sir; but be seated for he may soon come," and Claude Avon arose politely and offered a chair to the gray-haired man, as he believed him, for so his wig represented him.

The man took the seat with the air of one whose right it was, crossed his hands meekly and sighed.

Seated by the window Faustine eyed the disguised sailor closely, and her face flushed and then paled.

Rising, she said:

"Excuse me a moment, Irene, and you, Claude, for I will soon return, and in time for our drive."

Then she left the room, while the pretended Josiah Allen Jenks sighed again and asked in a sing-song voice:

"Who is that beautiful being, my son?"

"Miss Faustine Fairfax, sir; she is a daughter of a planter."

"Ah! I thank you, my son, and this sweet young lady is your sister, for I mark the resemblance."

"Yes, sir."

"May Heaven bless you, my children," meekly said the outlaw.

"My sister, and Faustine, deserve all blessings, Reverend Sir, though I cannot say that same for myself," said Claude Avon in his reckless way.

What remark the pretended minister would have made to this, is not known, for just then Faustine came in.

She held a piece of paper in her hand, and said, coldly, as she advanced toward Redfield:

"This note must be for you, sir, as it is for one in this parlor, and I know that it is not for my friends here."

He grasped the note quickly, opened it, coughed and arose, while he said, as he bowed his way out of the parlor:

"Yes, thank you, it is for me, and I shall not forget your kindness, miss. No, never!"

Neither Claude Avon or his sister saw aught in this beneath the surface; but the note read:

"I know you, Redfield Romer."

"So far I have not betrayed to others who my abductor was; but, unless you leave this hotel and city within the hour, I shall make known to the authorities that the Outlawed Cadet is here, and murder and piracy are expiated upon the gallows."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DENIAL.

CONVINCED that there was some cause for the fainting attacks, which Faustine had several times been taken with, Mr. Fairfax sought the advice of a physician and brought him to the hotel with him to see his daughter.

Faustine, Irene and Claude had just returned from a horseback gallop along the river, and when the doctor saw the beautiful face of the invalid, as her father had said she was, flushed with the color the exercise had brought into her cheeks, he said in a pleasant way:

"Why, Mr. Fairfax, is this the young lady I am to prescribe for?"

"Oh, father, how could you?" asked Faustine, reprovingly.

"The truth is, doctor, my daughter has twice fallen in a death-like faint, once some months ago, in New York, where I could see no motive for it, and again in the parlor this morning."

"She seems in perfect health, and yet I wish to get at the cause of these attacks."

"Perhaps a little too tight lacing," said the practical old doctor.

"No, doctor, I am not guilty of that offense," Faustine answered, with a smile.

The man of medicine took her little hand and placed his fingers upon her pulse.

"As regular as a drum-beat; but do you suffer pain, young lady?"

"None, sir."

"It may be a love affair, Mr. Fairfax."

"No, doctor, I am heart free," laughed Faustine; but the doctor's eyes were upon her face as he spoke, and she saw that he seemed to read that she was in trouble.

"Well, Miss Faustine, I will give you a prescription, and you can fill it yourself," and he hastily wrote a few lines in his prescription-book, tore out the leaf, and said, as he handed it to Faustine:

"Follow this advice, young lady, and you will improve."

"Come, planter, I don't see any way to charge you for this visit, so will take a mint julep with you in payment," and the two left the room.

Glancing at the "prescription" Faustine read:

"You have some sorrow that weighs hard upon you."

"Tell your troubles to some true friend, and ask their advice for yours is a heartache only."

"Irene," and she turned at once to her friend.

"Well, Faustine?"

"Here is the doctor's 'prescription.'"

"How strange, and yet I have felt the same about you, Faustine."

"Then may I tell you of my sorrows?"

"Yes, and gladly will I do all I can to give you comfort, dear Faustine."

"Sit there, and I will tell you," and Faustine told of her meeting with Redfield Romer, when he had saved the packet schooner from the mutineers, and then of her believing him to be her beau ideal.

Her love for him, and his avowal of love for her, she told of, concealing nothing.

Her voice quivered as she spoke of his dishonor, his wild life, his becoming a murderer and being outlawed as such, and she added:

"Then I ceased to love him, Irene, and tore his image from my heart."

"I was trying to forget him, for he had been a long year a fugitive, when again he crossed my path, and you shall know when and how."

Then she told of his coming to New York, his attempted abduction of her from Harbor View, how she had shielded him by keeping the secret, and last of his attack on the Gulf Queen, and how he had carried her off, to threaten her life, and then set her adrift in the life-boat, to save his vessel and himself.

"Irene, it was his voice that sung those songs on the island as we came here, and his vessel was in chase until driven back by Captain Le Roy."

"It was Redfield Romer that caused me to faint in the parlor, for I believed him dead, after what Leon had said, and more, he was the pretended clergyman there this afternoon, and to whom I gave the slip of paper."

"Why, Faustine, you astound me!"

"I was astounded myself, at his audacity, Irene, but I made up my mind to strike back, and quickly he freed me of his presence."

"Yet you cannot love that man now, Faustine, vile as he has proven himself, though certainly, from what I saw of him when he placed you on the sofa, he serves Satan in, I was going to almost say, the guise of an angel, for he certainly is a most noble-looking man."

"Yes, Irene, he is, and strangely fascinating; but his nature is as cruel as death, and his crimes have made him a very devil."

"Still you regard him with some tender feeling, Faustine, or you would hate him."

"I hate him, yes, and yet he was once the man I loved."

"I wish he was even dead, and yet I would shield him from the gallows."

"Now, Irene, you may say I am a strange creature, and yet I tell you that if to-day Redfield were all honor and truth, and he stood before me alongside of Captain Le Roy, and I had to choose between them, I would choose Fred Le Roy."

"Can this be possible, Faustine?"

"Yes, and for that reason I would not have Captain Le Roy capture Redfield and hang him, as I know that he would."

"Now what am I to do?"

"Has Captain Le Roy ever shown you that he cared for you?"

"I do not know him well enough to understand him, Irene."

"He is a strangely fascinating man, and a handsomer one I never saw."

"His crew idolize him, and yet he rules with an iron hand."

"He is as hard as adamant, and yet he is as gentle as a woman."

"Yes, he is all that, and yet I cannot understand him, Faustine."

"I wish that I could, and especially would I know if it was madness in him that made him deny all knowledge of father and myself, or whether he is playing some deep game; but come, father said he would take us to the theater to-night, and we must get ready, and don't let my troubles worry you."

"No indeed, for I am glad to share them with you, Faustine," was Irene's reply, and a couple of hours after the two beautiful girls were the cynosure of all eyes, as they sat in a box at the theater, with Mr. Fairfax and Claude Avon as their escorts.

Suddenly a smile crossed the face of Faustine, her face flushed, and she said:

"See, father, there is Captain Le Roy in the opposite box, and he is alone."

"Will you not go and ask him to join us?"

"Certainly, my child, and glad to have him," and the planter left the box.

They saw him enter the one opposite and hold out his hand, while Captain Le Roy arose, bowed haughtily, and after a few words the planter returned alone.

"Faustine."

"Well, father?"

"Who is that man in that box?"

"Why Captain Le Roy of course."

"And do you think so, Irene?"

"Yes, sir, I should certainly say so, from what I saw of Captain Le Roy on his vessel as we came here."

"What do you say, Claude?"

"If it's not Le Roy, it's his ghost."

"Does he deny his identity, father?" asked Faustine anxiously.

"As firmly as he told us before at Waveside, he says that his name is Le Roy, Fred Le Roy, that he is captain of the Bride of the Wind, but that he never saw me but once before, and that when I asserted, with you, that I had met him before."

"This is remarkable; but suppose I go and see if he denies meeting me upon his vessel, on our way over here?" said Claude Avon.

"Do so, Claude, and if he does he is a madman," said the planter.

Claude at once left the box, and Faustine anxiously awaited developments, as did Irene and the planter.

They saw the young man enter the box, the occupant rise haughtily as before, and after a few words together Claude departed.

"Well?"

It was the planter who uttered the word.

"Oh, that man's crazy," said Claude.

"Did he not know you, Claude?"

"Faustine, I went in gushingly, and said:

"How are you, my dear Captain Le Roy? do come over and join us in our box, for you look as lonely here as an owl in the daytime."

"He said in a voice that was below zero:

"Pardon me, sir, but you have mistaken me for some one else."

"Not a bit of it, sir, for you are Captain Fred Le Roy, are you not?" I returned.

"I am," he said, stiffly.

"Commander of the schooner-of-war Bride of the Wind?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you are the man who so kindly kept us from capture by a pirate and entertained us right royally in your schooner?"

"I did nothing of the kind, sir, for, as I said before, I never saw you in my life, and I am a pirate-hunting, that being my duty in these waters, and, since my coming, I have not seen an outlaw craft."

"Pardon me, sir, if I ask you to allow me to be alone?"

"I gratified him very quickly, for I was convinced that he was crazy."

"This is remarkable," said Irene.

"There is a strange mystery in this, for Captain Le Roy is either given to fits of insanity or he is playing some deep game," Faustine said, in a manner that showed she was strangely impressed with the conduct of the young officer.

CHAPTER XX.

THE JOLLY OLD TAR.

To say that Redfield Romer was not alarmed, when he had read the slip of paper, handed him by Faustine in the hotel parlor, would be a mistake, for he certainly was.

Fearless to recklessness, where personal risk of life was concerned, he yet had a holy horror of the gallows, and he dreaded death at the hangman's hand more than all else in the world.

He knew that he was a conspicuous man, and one who could not go about without attracting attention, and that he might meet some one in port who knew him as the Outlawed Cadet, and to be betrayed would be to go to the gallows.

His disguise, good as it certainly was, Faustine had penetrated, and as he glanced at the paper in hand that proved it, he felt that she would be dangerous if aroused, and, after his treatment of her she might turn upon him as she threatened to do.

So he hastened back to the Señor Casandra.

"Well, back again?" said that worthy.

"I am, as you see."

"You are ahead of time, as I said to-night."

"I am here for another disguise, señor."

"Why, that is an excellent one."

"It was penetrated readily."

"Then by a woman."

"Yes."

"Their eyes are keen indeed; but what will you have now?"

"The dress of a jolly old sailor, with a gray wig, short hair, a fringe of white beard, pea-jacket and tarpaulin."

"Come in," was the laconic response, and within half an hour after, the Outlawed Cadet left with his face bronzed, and roughened by some process known to Señor Casandra, one eye closed by a green patch over it, his white teeth darkened with some herb, a gray chin beard and wig, and the dress of an old seaman.

He carried a large cane, had a boatswain's whistle hung about his neck, and looked like a jolly old tar of sixty.

Making his way down to the river, Redfield made inquiries, and soon discovered where the Arrow was at anchor, and found that she was about a quarter of a mile from his lugger.

Getting into a small boat he rowed out to the Arrow and hailed Leon, who sat on the cabin deck.

"Ahoj, shipmate! yer look lonesome, and I be jist ther old sea-dog ter cheer yer up, ef yer'll let me come aboard and rest my old arms a bit, fer I hain't ther oarsman I was forty years ago."

Leon saw only an old sailor, as he supposed, pulling about the river looking at the shipping, and he answered, in the kindness of his heart:

"Yes, sir; come on board, and if you are hungry master always has plenty in the cabin for those as need it."

The old sailor clambered on board, while one of the negro crew made his boat fast.

"You is kind, shipmate, though I doesn't need food jist now, havin' been to supper; but I was rowin' round, lookin' at the different craft and thinkin' of my sailor days; but is this a pleasure-boat, for she's as trim as a king's yacht?"

"She is a plantation lugger, sir, and master built her as a pleasure-craft and cargo-carrier, too."

"I see; but she's stanch for a river craft."

"She is an outside boat, sir, for master lives over on the other shore."

"Ah, I see; but who is capt'n?"

"I sail her, sir, and my crew are black men like myself."

"You hain't black."

"I'm a slave, sir."

"You looks Injun color, and your hair is like white folks'."

"My father was an Indian chief, who ran off with my mother from the plantation and married her; but she was a Creole negress, and when father died she went straight back to her old master, taking me with her, while she being a slave, I was born one too."

"I see; but I guess you has a good master, for you look happy as a clam at high tide, and your crew look as sleek as deacons on a Sunday."

"We have the best of masters, sir."

"He owns a big plantation, too, I guess?"

"Yes, sir; it's the largest place on the coast, and master owns nearly two hundred slaves."

"Oh, my! but when do you go back?"

"Next Monday afternoon, sir."

"Carry freight back, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; plantation stores and some baggage and boxes master and missy brought from the North with 'em."

"They are at the plantation, I suppose?"

"No, sir; they are in the city, and brought company over with them."

"Well, get your boys together and I'll sing 'em a song."

This Leon did, and the supposed jolly old tar entertained them for half an hour, singing some sea songs, after which he gleaned more information and then took his leave, muttering as he did so:

"A crew of nine, with the negro captain."

"Then there is the planter and a young man, a guest."

"Well, a boat's crew could take the craft from them; but I must not harm her father or friends, for that would turn her forever against me."

"I will have to take my schooner to prevent resistance."

"She goes back the way she came, he told me, and they were chased by a pirate coming on, and he ran the lugger through that channel, and his master sent him to pilot the cruiser in pursuit of the buccaneer."

"I see that he will be most valuable to me as a pilot, and when I take the fair Faustine, I will capture him too."

"Well, the jolly old tar has gotten what information he wished," and with a light laugh he rowed down to his own vessel.

He found his crew on the alert, and to keep them so he asked to go on board, but was refused.

"I wish to see your captain, lads."

"He is not on board, I told you," said the man in charge.

"Come, Leonard, it is I, your captain, and I am glad to see you on the watch and obeying my orders."

"I was here this afternoon too."

"We did not see you, sir, if you hailed from the shore."

"I did not hail, but came on board, and you failed to recognize me in my disguise of a parson."

"You see I am on the watch all the time, so be careful."

The men felt that it was necessary they should be, but said nothing.

"Get the lugger inshore, yonder by that old warehouse, and there will be wagons there before long to get your cargo, so have it on deck," and springing into his boat once more, the Outlawed Cadet rowed away in the darkness.

He went to the shop of Casandra, and joined by the señor took him to the lugger and they went hastily over the plunder, Redfield saying:

"There is your booty, so get it away as soon as you like, and to-morrow I will come in and get my pay."

"Where do you go now, Señor Captain?"

"That is none of your business, Señor Casandra," was the sharp retort, and Captain Redfield walked rapidly away for a man of his seeming years.

But reaching the streets he went along at a gait that became his years, and wended his steps to the hotel.

Going up to the landlord he asked to see Planter Fairfax, but was told that he had gone to the theater with his family, and the supposed old mendicant was quickly dismissed.

Straight to the theater he went, ascertained which was the Fairfax carriage in waiting, and stood near it until he saw the planter coming out with Irene on his arm.

Then followed Claude Avon escorting Faustine.

"Good lady, remember in your happiness a poor old sailor," he said, bending low and holding out his hand for alms.

Faustine started, hesitated, and then said:

"Claude, ask my father for a piece of gold for me, for—"

"Why, Faustine, I have—"

"No, no, ask father."

"Certainly, if you prefer not to let me give the old wretch something."

"I do prefer to give it myself, Mr. Avon, so kindly do as I ask you."

He bowed and hastened to the carriage where the planter awaited them.

"Redfield Romer, for the last time I warn you not to dog my steps."

The words were spoken rapidly, and she saw him start and then half-turn away.

Then she walked quickly on and said:

"Never mind, father, for I do not believe the old wretch, as Claude appropriately called him, is worthy of aid," and she sprang into the carriage, while Redfield hastened off, muttering:

"Curses upon her! A second time she has penetrated my disguise!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE UNHEEDED WARNING.

HAVING made Irene her *confidante*, Faustine told her of her second recognition of Redfield Romer, and that night, after their return from the theater, the two friends talked over the strange conduct of the Outlawed Cadet, and his persistent dogging of her steps.

They also referred to the mysterious denial of Captain Le Roy, and could find no solution of it, try as they might.

"These are strange times, Irene, and I fear that the worst is not yet," said Faustine, sadly, as she bade her friend good-night.

"Let us hope that all will soon come well," was the cheerful response of Irene.

The next morning Mr. Fairfax was conversing with an old friend in the rotunda of the hotel, when a person passing saluted the one to whom he was talking.

"Ho, captain, one minute please and join us," called out the planter's friend, and grasping the hand of the gentleman, he said:

"I wish to present you to my particular friend, Mr. Fairfax, one of the largest planters, a gentleman, a scholar, and one of the most hospitable of hosts, as you will find when you touch at his home at Wave-side."

"Mr. Fairfax, this is my young friend, Captain Fred Le Roy, who served under me as a midshipman when I was in the navy, and he commands the United States schooner-of-war *Bride of the Wind*, sent to these waters as a patrol against piracy."

To the surprise of the ex-naval officer, who was himself a planter on the Mississippi River above the city, the two thus introduced bowed stiffly, there was no offer of the hand of friendship.

In the mind of Duncan Fairfax was the thought:

"I will see what he has to say now."

As neither spoke, Mr. Cenas went on:

"I want you to know each other well, for outside of the fact that you are both fine fellows you, Fairfax, live in a somewhat unprotected position on the shore there, should a pirate get it into his head to rob your elegant home, and Le Roy could serve you well."

"I have all my male slaves drilled as soldiers, Cenas, and armed, as at a signal from my house I can muster eighty good soldiers to my aid, and we could make it warm for a buccaneer that came there, while, in addition, I have a little fort of six small guns on the hill, commanding my harbor and grounds, and it is a point of lookout from which a vessel approaching can be seen for miles, while Hillcrest, Beacon Hill, and several other plantations are within easy call, should I need aid."

"I have heard that you live like a commandant in his fortress, Fairfax; but still piracy is rampant in the Gulf, and the Government could have sent no better man to put it down, or a finer craft, than are Captain Le Roy and the vessel he commands."

"I gladly admit that, Mr. Cenas, and I am already under obligations to Captain Le Roy for kindnesses done me and mine which thanks can never repay."

And Mr. Fairfax spoke with feeling, while he looked the young sailor squarely in the face.

"I regret to say, sir, that in our former meetings you have made just such references, and I am at a loss to comprehend them, excepting that you mistake me for some one else."

Captain Le Roy spoke in an annoyed manner, and the planter responded:

"There can be but one Captain Le Roy, sir, as your appearance is peculiarly striking, and but one *Bride of the Wind*, as your vessel, hull, rig, and armament is also most remarkable."

"Still, sir, I must say that you have been imposed on by some one representing himself as Captain Le Roy."

"Good-morning, gentlemen."

And Fred Le Roy bowed coldly and walked away, Mr. Cenas evidently surprised at what had passed between the two he had introduced and which he could not understand.

"I say, Cenas, who is that young naval officer?" said Planter Fairfax in a puzzled way, as the sailor walked away.

"Fred Le Roy, one of the finest fellows in the navy; handsome, isn't he?"

"Yes, very."

"He was sent here, and I am about the only one he knows well, so I wanted him to meet you, as his cruisers will often take him to your neighborhood; but it seems you have met before?"

"We have, and under circumstances in which he served me well; but he denies it, for some reason, and, Cenas, pardon me if I ask you if he is just right in the head?"

"Why, certainly."

"He don't act it," and the planter went on to tell just how the young sailor had come to the rescue of Faustine, and afterward of the lugger, and then of his coming to Wave-side, and pretending ignorance of their former meeting, and doing the same at the theater the night before.

"I would think I was mistaken, had not Faustine also seen his strange conduct at Wave-side, and last night again she was the one to discover him in the theater, and all of our party recognized him."

"Then too he admits being Captain Le Roy, the commander of the *Bride of the Wind*, but denies that he has seen us, and acts coldly, while at other times he was most pleasant and a genial host on his vessel."

"This is remarkable, Fairfax, and I do not wonder that you think he is off in his head; but get ready, please, as you are going to drive up to my place with me to-day."

"Yes, I will tell my daughter I will not be back until late; but one word more about this Le Roy."

"Certainly."

"He was a midshipman under you?"

"Yes, when I commanded the *Boxer*."

"He is from Maryland, his father being a gentleman of wealth."

"I have never heard Fred Le Roy spoken of except in terms of the highest praise, and I cannot understand what you tell me of him."

The planter then went to his room, while Mr. Cenas, observing the young naval captain near walked up to him and said:

"Well, Le Roy, what luck have you had in your pirate-hunting so far?"

"Very little, commodore, for I have not been able to get just the man I wanted for a pilot in these waters; but tell me, please, if I can ask it and mean no offense to you, is not your handsome old friend, the planter, crazy?"

"Le Roy, that is just the question he asked me about you."

"The deuce he did! then he certainly is crazy."

"He is as surely convinced that you are, for he says that you did him services he can never repay, and yet when at other times he meets you, you decline to know him, and deny all knowledge of what you have done for him."

"Commodore, you trace up the old gentleman's pedigree and you'll find the whole family were mad, for I never met him in my life as he says, and yet would be glad to, but that he would not make a pleasant companion as a lunatic, any more than would his beautiful daughter, who has inherited his insanity."

"They should be looked to, commodore, along with a wild-looking young fellow who last night introduced himself as Mr. Avon, and must be of the same blood."

"There is some strange mystery in this, Fred."

"Solve it, I beg of you, commodore, for I would be glad to know sane people like them, I confess."

"Is there any other vessel like yours in the Gulf?"

"There is but one *Bride of the Wind* afloat, commodore," said the young sailor, with pardonable pride in his tones when speaking of his vessel.

"And there is but one Fred Le Roy?"

"I have not heard of any other, sir."

"He could hardly be your counterpart, if there was."

"Thank you, sir; but he certainly could not have my name, my rank, my vessel, and be the image of me, too, while I know on the navy register there is no other such person."

"Well, I'm all at sea, and, Fred, I'm at a loss to know who is the lunatic, you or Fairfax; but I'll find out for you."

"I should be glad to know, I assure you, commodore," replied the young sailor, with a laugh, as he walked away while Mr. Cenas a few moments after joined Duncan Fairfax and the two drove off together for the Cenas Plantation, fifteen miles distant.

Hardly had Mr. Fairfax departed when Faustine and Irene came down to the parlor, dressed to go out for a walk.

They were waiting for Claude, who had promised to join them there soon.

In the mean time a gentleman with a military air, dressed in a semi-uniform, wearing gloves, and with a full black beard, tinged with gray, walked up to the landlord and asked in a voice in which there was a foreign accent, to see Mr. Duncan Fairfax.

"I regret to say that he has just driven off for the day with Planter Cenas," said the landlord, struck by the appearance of his distinguished-looking guest.

"I am very, very sorry, for I am an old friend of Fairfax's, and am in town but for the day," and the stranger placed his gold-headed cane to his lips and posed in a thoughtful, disappointed air.

"His daughter is here, sir, and perhaps she would see you."

"Ah! and he has then a daughter grown to womanhood?"

"Well, well, how time flies."

"Just send my card, please, Mr. Landlord," and a servant was dispatched with the piece of pasteboard.

Taking the card from the servant, Faustine read thereon:

"PROF. HEINRICH HAMMEL,
Boston,
Mass."

"I am sorry, for father has gone away for all day, and here is an old Boston friend of his, whom I have often heard him speak of, but never met."

"He was father's tutor and Auntie Lennox's on the plantation, and taught them French and German, and Aunt Amelie has told me he was only a year older than she was, and younger than father, but very smart."

"Why do you not see him, Faustine?" asked Irene, to whom she had spoken.

"He asked to see you, miss," said the servant.

"Then show him up to the parlor, please—Nay, Irene, do not leave, for he is not a beau, though he was in love with Aunt Amelie, I believe."

"And he lives in Boston now?"

"Yes; has a school there, I think."

A moment after Professor Heinrich Hammel came into the parlor.

He was as polite as a French dancing-master, bowed twice to both maidens, and slid up to Irene, and grasping her hand said with a marked German accent:

"Oh, mees, I was so glad to make you acquaintance."

"You was t'e image of your fader."

"Pardon me, Professor Hammel, but that lady is Miss Fairfax."

And Irene could hardly repress a smile.

"Oh, himmel! so she was, for I vas see t'e resemblance more striking now."

And in his broken English, aided by French and German words, he ran on at a lively rate for full a minute, flattering both maidens in a way that was funny.

Irene seemed to enjoy it, but she saw that Faustine's face was pale and her manner really stern.

At last the visitor stopped for breath and Faustine said pleasantly:

"Pardon me, Professor Hammel, but I wish you to meet Mr. Avon, the brother of my friend here, and I will call him."

She glided from the room and for fully ten minutes she was gone.

Then she returned and said:

"Mr. Avon is coming, professor, and I have asked two other gentlemen to join us expressly to meet you, as this is the third time I have penetrated your disguise, Redfield Romer!"

"Your ring has betrayed you each time!"

She pointed to a strange ring upon the little finger of his left hand of a most unique design, and one which she had herself given him two years before.

In spite of his nerve a cry escaped the man's lips, Irene uttered a slight scream, and into the room came Claude Avon, with two officers of the law.

CHAPTER XXII.

A WOMAN'S HEART

It seemed for a moment, when Faustine betrayed Redfield Romer, that he was about to spring upon her and kill her, and he made a half-step toward her.

But instantly his manner changed again, and he greeted the officers and Claude with the same polite manner and with the air of what he represented himself to be.

"These was your friends, Mees Fairfax, was they?"

"I was so glad," he said.

And he grasped the hand of the astonished Claude, and then of the officers.

"Is this the man, Faustine?" asked Claude.

"Yes."

"And you wish him arrested?"

"Yes, Claude."

"Officers, you hear what Miss Fairfax says."

"We do; come, sir, you are my prisoner."

And one of the constables grasped Redfield by one arm, while his comrade seized the other.

Then occurred a most consummate piece of acting upon the part of the Outlawed Cadet.

He shrunk back and cried, mingling French, English and German together:

"Oh, mademoiselle, ma chere lady!"

"Do you vas haf me arrested? *Mein Gott in Himmel!* I vas a goot mans, I vas do nodings, not one nodings—*vraiment!*"

"What is your charge against this man, miss?" asked the head constable.

Faustine started, and keeping silent, Irene seeing her emotion said:

"He is a—"

"No, no; I will make the charge later."

"I will come to the prison with my father," hastily said Faustine, interrupting Irene.

"Then your charge is serious enough for us to take him to prison, miss?"

"Yes, officer, take him to the *carcel*," was the stern response.

"Oh, mademoiselle, you vas vant to kill me," groaned Redfield.

And Faustine started at his words and half-turned toward him; but she kept silent and the officers took their prisoner away.

"In the name of the saints, Faustine, what has the old scamp done?" asked the amazed Claude.

"I think I recognize in him one who has bitterly wronged Uncle and Aunt Lennox," she answered, evasively.

"If you are not sure, you should have let him go, for it is a grave offense to arrest a man on a charge that he can prove himself innocent of, and he certainly looks like a harmless old creature."

Faustine made no reply, and soon after the three went out on a shopping excursion.

It was late in the afternoon when they returned, and it was just dark, when, pleading fatigue, Faustine went to her room and asked not to be called for supper.

"Irene," she said, as her friend, seeing her motion for her to follow her, did so.

"Well!"

"I am going to the prison."

"Oh, Faustine!"

"Yes, I am going to see that man."

"Faustine, are you mad?"

"No, I am perfectly sane; but do not let any one come to my room, and if father returns tell him you do not wish to disturb me."

"I will be back soon."

So saying she left the room, Irene offering no remonstrance, as she saw that it was useless to do so.

Going to the hotel's private entrance, Faustine ordered a carriage and soon after was at the *carcel* of the city.

"I would see the officer in charge," she said to the attendant.

She was thickly veiled, and the presence being reported of a lady in waiting she was quickly admitted to the inner office.

The commandant arose to greet her, when she said abruptly:

"A prisoner was brought here this morning from the San Luis Hotel?"

"Yes, miss, one by the name of Heinrich Hammel."

"I am Miss Fairfax, who requested his arrest; but I desire to see him alone, if I can do so."

"I will have him brought from his cell, miss."

"With your permission I would prefer to see him there."

"As you please, miss, please follow me."

He led the way through the dimly-lighted corridors, and soon stopped at an iron gate, which opened with a key he took from his pocket.

"Hammel, a lady to see you."

Seated upon a rude cot, in the dim light, Faustine saw the man she sought.

He wore still his disguise as the professor, and looked surprised at her coming.

The commandant bowed and said:

"I must lock you within the cell, lady, would you see the man alone; but when you need me, pull this bell-rope, please," and he handed her a cord that hung outside in the corridor.

Then the door closed and she was locked in a cell with Redfield Romer, the Outlawed Cadet, and a man who had sworn to make her his wife.

"You have keen eyes, Miss Fairfax, to penetrate my disguise, as you did," he said with a sneer.

"I saw that ring, sir, when you came as a clergyman, when you held forth your hand as a mendicant, and this morning when you appeared in your present disguise."

"You gave it to me, you placed it on my finger, and I have never taken it off, never will, in life, though it has betrayed me."

"It will go with me to the gallows, Faustine, and then I beg that you will take it back, as a souvenir of what I was once, if nothing else."

He spoke with the intensest feeling, and she seemed moved, in spite of herself, and said:

"No, I care not for it; keep it."

"It will be but a short time that I can keep it now, as my sentence is already pronounced, and I suppose I will quickly hang."

"Not by my act, for I have come to release you."

"Release me?" he cried, eagerly.

"Yes."

"Set me free?" and he seemed deeply moved.

"Yes, upon certain conditions."

"What are they?"

"That you will at once leave this city."

"I will do so."

"That you will give up your life as a pirate."

"As a pirate?"

"Yes, for I know just what you are."

"I am no pirate."

"Then under what flag do you cruise the seas on an armed deck, if you are not a freebooter?"

He started, but replied:

"I am outlawed for a crime, I admit, but I am no pirate, for I have broken no law, and merely equipped that vessel to get possession of you."

"You fired upon a Government cruiser, sir, and that is piracy."

"You draw the law too fine, Miss Fairfax."

"Well, do you pledge yourself to leave this city at once?"

"I do."

"Do you pledge yourself to give up the lawless life you lead?"

"I do."

"And last, do you pledge yourself never to intentionally cross my path again, nor to in any way molest me or mine?"

"I do."

"You swear to keep these pledges?"

"Upon my honor, yes."

"Swear by something you hold more sacred than your honor," she said, with sarcasm.

Quickly came his words:

"Then upon your honor, yes!"

"Enough; I will now ask the commandant to set you free, and say to you forever—Farewell."

He stretched out his hands toward her, but she had already pulled the bell-cord, and turned away.

The commandant came quickly, but not until the prisoner had grasped her hand, kissed it, and said fervently:

"Forgive me!"

"Yes."

"You are ready, Miss Fairfax?"

"Yes, Monsieur Commandant, and I will make no charge against this man, so beg you to release him."

"As you please, lady; but I suppose you have weighed well what you are doing, for in my opinion he is a villain."

"I shall make no charge against him, sir, after what he has said to me."

"Then, Heinrich Hammel, you are free, thanks to Miss Fairfax."

"And will you kindly state in your reports, if necessary to say something, that I withdraw my charge?"

"I will do so with pleasure, and have thus far given no publicity to the arrest, awaiting your coming to make your charge against the prisoner."

"I thank you, Monsieur Commandant; good-night," and without a glance at Redfield Romer Faustine glided away, and returning to the hotel reached her room just as her father returned and asked for her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

THE commandant waited until the carriage of Faustine had rolled away from the *carcel*, and then he led the pretended professor into his private office.

"My man, what were you arrested for this morning?" he asked, quietly.

"At t'e whims of a young ladys, monsieur," was the answer.

"What did you do?"

"Nodings."

"Where had you met her before?"

"I vas ter fader's tutors ven he vas a young mans."

"You do not look as old as Mr. Fairfax, and yet you say you were his tutor?"

"I vas not so old; I vas young, but haf great sense for teach language, t'e French, and t'e Germans, vat I vas t'e latter, a German mans."

Instantly the commandant addressed him a question in German, and promptly it was answered in that language.

Then he spoke to him in French, and received a reply in the purest Parisian tongue.

"I cannot yet believe you, Hammel."

"I vas tell t'e truf," and he dropped back into his broken English again.

"How old are you?"

"Fifty-five times."

"Now you are twenty-five," and quick as a flash the commandant tore off his wig and beard.

Redfield turned livid, but uttered no word.

"I suspected you, my fine fellow, of being in disguise, when the officers brought you in, and I watched you pretty closely."

"Now I do not know why Miss Fairfax let you go, but imagine you are some old suitor who has been worrying her, and adopted this disguise to be near her, and she penetrated it."

"She makes no charge, so I will set you free, but I think I have seen your face before, and I would know it again, as you now are, among a million, and I warn you if I catch you in this city after to-night, I will arrest you, hunt up your pedigree, and do all I can to put you behind the bars, for you wear the mask of a gentleman and are a scoundrel underneath."

"Go, sir, and heed my warning."

Redfield Romer did not need urging, and departed with a haste that was hardly dignified.

"Oh! but a day of reckoning shall come for all this!" he cried, as he gained the barque, imagining, as most villains do, that he was being abused.

Adjusting his disguise he went his way, and half an hour after put in an appearance at the shop of the Señor Casandra.

"Well, captain, your present disguise was all right?" said the shopman, as he ushered him into his private sitting-room.

"Nonsense. It was seen through at a glance."

"You don't mean it?"

"I do."

"Did you speak with your German dialect, too?"

"I did."

"The one who saw through you is a shrewd one."

"Two did so."

"Both women?"

"No."

"You surprise me."

"One was the commandant of the city *carcel*."

"You saw him?"

"I have been his guest the past eight hours."

"You surprise me."

"I was surprised myself."

"How did you get away?"

"Ask me first how I got caught."

"Well, how was it?"

"I went to the San Luis, and knowing that the one I sought was away, sent my card to his daughter."

"She is the same one that has twice before recognized me."

"Well?"

"I took the name, as I told you I would, of an old German I have often heard my mother say was the private tutor of herself and her brother, and whom I knew the young lady had not seen."

"It seemed to work to a charm, and I was delighted with my fine acting, when the lady excused herself, and coming back in a few moments accompanied by a young gentleman and two officers of the law."

"I was arrested, she saying she would make a charge later."

"But how did she know you?"

"From this ring, which she gave me herself two years ago."

"Ah! it is an odd ring, remarkably unique."

"I will give you a hundred dollars for it."

"It is not for sale at any sum."

"I see; sentiment, romance and love; but how did you get away?"

"She came and released me, telling the commandant she would make no charge."

"Then she departed, and after abusing me the commandant jerked my wig and beard from my head, read me a lecture and told me to go."

"You obeyed?"

"With alacrity."

"Well?"

"I was then told to leave the city."

"And you will do so?"

"To-night."

"Well, I suppose you wish a settlement with me?"

"I do."

"I have gone carefully over all your goods."

"They agree with the list?"

"Yes; but you had some gems and jewelry, you said?"

"Yes; I have them with me."

"Let me see them."

"No; I will first settle the booty from the lugger."

"It is not of much value."

"Come, Señor Casandra, I looked over it all, and it is in good condition, worth forty per cent. of its original cost."

"I will not give but twenty per cent. of its cost."

"Do you suppose I risk my neck in a noose to get goods for you to make all the money?" angrily asked the outlaw captain.

"You risk your life in getting booty, I risk jail in selling it."

"You, the pirate, cannot do without me, the seller," was the cool response.

"You are mistaken, for much that is gotten from prizes, is gold, silver and gems."

"Which the captain generally takes, leaving cargoes and heavier booty to be sold for the crew," said Casandra with a sneer.

"Well, at what do you value my cargo?"

"Twenty thousand dollars."

"Just two hundred and fifty dollars each for my men."

"Yes, if you have that number."

"I have that number."

"And your officers must share your products of the gems with you."

"I have no officers."

"What, señor?"

"I have no officers."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do."

"How do you control your ship?"

"I command her myself, but I have a boat-swain, pilot, quartermasters, coxswains, and gunners, but none get more pay than the ordinary seamen."

"You are a remarkable man, señor."

"We are not talking business now, Señor Casandra."

"Well, sir?"

"I wish forty thousand dollars for that booty."

"I will not give it."

"You have it stored?"

"Yes."

"I must have the money I demand, for I can put my crew in fine humor with five hundred each."

"I will not give it."

"Are you able to do so?"

Señor Casandra smiled.

"I ask you are you able to pay me forty thousand?"

"Do you see what my shop contains?"

"Yes."

"It has the worth of fifty thousand dollars in it."

"That is not money, Casandra."

"Do you see that iron box behind you?"

"Yes," and Redfield turned, and as he did so, in a mirror he saw a man's form through a curtain, and the hand grasped a knife.

He showed no sign of his discovery, but asked:

"Well, what of the box, señor?"

"It contains fifty thousand in gold, and gems worth as much more."

"I am a rich man, Señor Captain."

"So I should think, and you can pay the amount I demand."

"Granted; but now to the jewels."

Redfield carefully took a buckskin belt from about his waist and placing it upon the table unrolled it, displayed a number of gems, and some small pieces of rare jewelry.

"This was Captain Isola's legacy to me, for I found this about his waist," he said grimly.

"I see; you have here a small fortune."

"So I think; look carefully over them, please, and give me their exact value."

The señor obeyed, and Redfield turned quickly and saw the curtain move, as he had expected it would, and a man stepped back to cover.

Instantly he threw his hand forward, and a pistol was in it.

There came a sharp report, and, as the alarmed Spaniard sprang to his feet he received a stunning blow upon the head from the pistol hand, which caused him to sink in his tracks.

Springing across the room, Redfield drew the curtain aside.

It hung at what looked to be a window; but there was a closet there, and in it, all in a heap, lay the form of a man.

One hand grasped a knife convulsively, the other held a pistol, and the man breathed his last as Redfield gazed upon him, for the bullet had pierced his heart.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TELL-TALE PAPER.

For a moment, after discovering that his shot had been fatal, Captain Redfield stood in watchful silence.

He looked like a stag at bay, awaiting for the coming of the hounds, whose baying he heard.

He feared that his shot would be heard and bring help.

But he did not know just how the Señor Casandra lived.

After waiting for some time he crossed over to the table, put his belt of gems about his waist again, and then bent over the prostrate form of the man whom his severe blow had felled.

"I've killed him, too," he muttered.

Then he walked back to the form in the closet, and dragging it out, looked about him to see if there was any doorway there; but he found none.

Seeing a slip of paper sticking from the pocket of his victim, he took it out and read:

"Be in the closet to-night, for I expect one here to whom I am to pay large money."

"His goods are worth five times what I will offer him, and if he refuses to take my price, it will be the signal for you to spring upon him and use your knife."

"Do not fire unless you have to."

"He has jewels with him that I believe are worth a fortune, and we will get them."

"I will divide the latter with you, for your work, for I will be content with half, as I get revenge, for he is the murderer of my brother Isola."

CASANDRA.

P. S.—Do not disappoint me, and be on time."

This was written in Spanish, and in an educated hand, for as the brother of Captain Isola, Casandra had been doubtless reared a gentleman.

"So, Señor Casandra, you meant to revenge yourself upon me, for killing your brother, did you?"

"And you get a hireling to do this work, and were to divide with him my blood-stained money?"

"Well, I'll take yours, as I did your brother's."

"But how cool you were about it, when I told you I had killed your dear brother, for I never had a thought that he was anything to you."

"But I must to work," and breaking off suddenly in his comments, he stepped over to the form of the Spaniard.

A superb diamond pin was in his scarf, and this was quickly removed.

Then a search of his pockets brought forth the keys he seemed seeking for, and one fitted the iron chest.

"Ah! here is a fortune."

"I can give up the sea now, and can offer Faustine a handsome dower when she becomes my wife, and she will not know the money is blood-stained; in fact, all money has a stain upon it."

He found a leather bag hanging on the wall, and into this thrust the contents of the iron chest.

Then he cautiously opened the door leading into the shop, which was closed for the night, and took down from the shelf a number of clothes.

Selecting a sailor suit he took it back into the office, and quickly changed the "professor's" disguise for the seaman's attire, casting on the floor with the other clothes his wig, beard, hat and spectacles.

Another search of the shop rewarded him with the finding of a stout carpet-bag, and into this he swept the treasures of the iron chest.

It was a heavy load, but he shouldered it, and then made his way through the shop to the outer door.

It was heavily barred, but he effected an exit, and started at once for the river-bank.

Springing into a boat he rowed out to his lugger, and was soon on his way down the river under a stiff breeze.

"There is the very craft that chased me and forced me to yield up Faustine," he said to himself, as the lugger passed near the Bride of the Wind.

"And she it was that headed me off in my chase of the lugger, and drove the Sea Nettle to its doom, so I have two scores to settle with her commander; but now to reach my beautiful schooner in safety, put my crew in good-humor with their share of the gold which the Señor Casandra contributed, and then—then—Well, we shall see what then," and the binnacle light shining full upon his face showed there an expression that it was hard to fathom, for certainly it was not stamped with good resolves.

The lugger being without a cargo, sailed lightly, and Redfield kept her under all the canvas that she would draw, for he seemed anxious to get as soon as possible under the protection of the schooner's guns.

It was after dawn some time when he ran out of the southwest pass and headed over the blue waters of the Gulf from the retreat where he had left his vessel.

Soon after nightfall the lugger glided into the lagoon where the Bother was in hiding, and, seen by the watchful eyes on board the schooner, loud came the words:

"Luff sharp and lay to, or I'll fire into you!"

"Ho, old man; on the alert, I see; and it behooves you to be, for every other man nowadays carries a hangman's noose for pirates," called out Redfield as, not obeying the order, he held on to the side of the schooner.

"It is you, captain; but I did not know the lugger."

"No; the boys painted her up and rigged her out in a new set of sails; but we must get out of this, for there is a large armed schooner-of-war up at the city, and she was sent to these waters especially as a pirate patrol."

"And which way, captain?" asked the old pilot, as Redfield sprang on the deck of the Bother.

"The lugger sails to Pensacola for stores, as I did not get them in the city, and then goes to the Florida coast, at the Lost Island, where we touched, you remember, and which I said would make a good retreat; so put a man on board who can take her there, and here is money for him to purchase stores with."

"There is none better, sir, than the one now in charge of the lugger, Leonard, captain."

"So I think."

And after giving the man, Leonard, his instructions where to go, what to get in the way of stores, and to await him at the Lost Island, Redfield saw the lugger sail away, and then turned to the pilot.

"I gave the men on the lugger their prize-money, pilot, five hundred dollars to each, and now wish to pay the schooner's crew, after which we will get under sail and cruise about on the course that we came hither, for I have work to do in a few days."

And the tone and words were significant of evil to follow.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DISCOVERY.

WHEN Redfield, now seen to be a murderer and robber on the land as well as at sea, left the shop of the Spaniard he thought that he had closed the door after him.

But the latch did not catch, and it was blown open by the wind ere he had gone a couple of blocks after his fatal work, so soon committed after his pledges to Faustine.

A night-watchman strolling along with his lantern saw the door open, and supposing that the señor was within passed on.

Half an hour after he came back that way and the door was still open.

This was not like the Señor Casandra, he well knew.

He had come to like the Spaniard from a personal interest, for the señor was wont to fee him liberally for "taking a walk," at certain hours, when there were visitors to the shop that were not to be seen by outsiders.

Again he paid him for "being blind" on occasions when it was not best that he should see certain things.

So Old Toby, as he was called, had come to like Señor Casandra, for he always knew just where he could get a Spanish gold-piece.

"I say, señor, are you in thar?" he called out.

No answer.

"Señor Casandry"—Old Toby always called him Casandry—"I say, señor, are you in thar?" Still no response.

"Well, I do declare if this hain't strange," and the old man stepped within, and opened his lantern.

But all was silent.

"Señor Casandry!"

He called the name several times, and then said:

"There's a million o' money in this shop, from all accounts, and it isn't right to leave it unprotected."

"The señor must be drunk, though I never heard o' his gittin' so."

"I'll jist peek into his office, for he may have dropped off to sleep."

He walked to the end of the shop, opened the door softly and looked into the office.

The lamp burned brightly on the table, and what he saw caused him to drop his own lantern.

Then he turned and got out as fast as he could.

He pulled the door to after him and ran for the *carcel*.

The commandant was just leaving for his home when Old Toby dashed up.

"Commandant!"

He gasped for breath and could say no more.

"Toby, have you got a fit?" quietly asked the officer.

"No, no, but the Señor Casandra is dead."

"Ah! is that all, Toby?"

"Ah! he's been murdered and robbed, but he killed the robber, and both of 'em lies there dead this blessed instant."

The commandant turned and said to an attendant:

"Send the constables after me to the shop of Pedro Casandra, the buyer of second-hand goods."

Then turning to the old watchman he continued:

"Come, Toby, we will go there together."

Toby had gotten his breath now, and, in the presence of the calm-mannered chief of the city's guardians of the peace, he got back his courage and told his story.

"And you dropped your lantern, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"I hope you have not set the place on fire."

This alarmed Toby, the very thought driving the color again from his face, and he started forward at a run.

The shop was soon reached, and the commandant entered, closing the door behind him.

The lantern lay where Toby had dropped it, the fall having fortunately extinguished it.

The lamp on the table, however, revealed the form of the Señor Casandra, while over in the corner lay the man slain by the pistol-shot.

"They has killed each other," whispered Toby.

So the commandant thought at first for he said:

"Yes, this man attempted to rob Casandra, doubtless secreting himself here in the room, behind this curtain, and the señor killed him, though he got his death-wound from the robber."

Bending over he cried quickly:

"This man is not dead!"

It was the Señor Casandra of whom he spoke, and he hastily examined him to find a wound.

"He was struck here on the head, and with a pistol barrel I am sure."

"He is not dead, though he may die."

"This wound was never given by that man yonder, for he fell where he was shot, and Casandra could not have fired his pistol after receiving this wound."

"Ah! it is as I thought, for here are Casandra's pistols, and both are loaded."

Speaking aloud, but to himself, he arose and

went over to the dead man, and knelt by his side, as he said:

"This shot entered his heart, and killed him instantly."

"Yes, he still grasps in death his knife and pistol, and the latter is still loaded."

"I have seen this man before and have known him as the friend of Casandra."

"He never worked, yet always had money."

"Those who came here to rob, killed this man and wounded Casandra, and they got away with their booty too."

"Ah! what clothes are these?"

He sprung forward and took up the clothing which Captain Redfield had thrown down upon the floor.

Quickly he examined them, one and all, and then the wig, false beard and spectacles.

"Toby!"

"Sir to you," and Toby started at the sudden utterance of his name, so stern was the voice of the commandant.

"I know the man that did this deed!"

"You do, sir?" gasped Toby.

"Yes, I saw him not two hours ago."

"Oh, Lordy!"

"Here come my men," and the commandant let into the shop his three constables, and quickly gave them orders to call a physician, and first see to aiding the wounded Spaniard, after which to remain in charge of the shop until further orders.

A physician soon came and after examining the unconscious man, said that he might recover, but he doubted it.

"Do all in your power for him, doctor," said the commandant, as he walked away, and wended his steps homeward, muttering to himself:

"Miss Fairfax knows who that murderer is and she must tell."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A DEAD SECRET.

THE City of New Orleans was astounded, the morning after the scenes related in the last chapter, at the discovery made by Old Toby the watchman, that a murder had been committed, at the rooms of Señor Pedro Casandra, who himself lay at the point of death, from a wound at the hand of the assassin, or assassins.

It was known too that the iron chest of the Spaniard had been broken open and robbed, and so valuable must have been the contents thereof, that the robber did not take articles of really fair value, but left them as unworthy his attention.

The Señor Casandra had long been known as a man supposed to be very rich.

He had come to New Orleans years before as a Spanish gentleman, who had been a Cuban planter and amassed a fortune.

He had furnished his rooms in elegant style, and lived on the best the land afforded for a couple of years.

Then came a scandal, for one, Isola Casandra, a Spanish naval officer, ordered by his Government to carry a treasure-ship from Cuba to Spain, had proven recreant to the trust, turned pirate, seized the gold and divided it with his men.

Pedro Casandra had often spoken of his brother, Captain Isola Casandra of the Spanish Navy, and, when the affair became known, in utter humiliation, it was said, the señor sold out his fine home, hied him to a low part of the city where he was not known, gave up his former rich and aristocratic friends, and devoted himself to merchandising.

He began in a small way, bought second-hand goods at a low price, and sold them at almost what they brought new, and heaped up money.

Not waiting for his former friends to give him the "cold shoulder," when he met them, he "cut them dead," and it was not long before he was known not to possess a friend.

There was some talk as to how he got rich so fast, and rumor had it that the contents of his shop were fabulous in nature; but the Señor Casandra held his peace, and often it was that some of his former aristocratic friends were forced to come to him for loans, and to sell their furniture.

He seemed to rejoice in this, taking their downfall as a kind of quiet revenge, though they certainly had not been the cause of his brother turning pirate, or his retiring to a life of seclusion.

Such was the man that had been struck down by Redfield Romer.

The city was greatly excited over the affair, and rumor had it that the robber had gotten millions from the iron chest.

As for the señor, he lay unconscious in his bedroom, hovering between life and death, and it was chances in favor of death.

He therefore could not tell the story of the robber, or robbers.

The dead man was not very well known about town, though a number had seen him, and he was supposed to be interested with the Señor Casandra in some way.

Where he lived could not be found out, for Casandra kept bachelor's hall alone, doing his own cooking and housework.

He had no clerk, no servant, and when he

left his shop, which was seldom, he locked the door after him and put the key in his pocket.

Old Toby the watchman became quite a hero, especially in his own estimation, for the good-natured commandant did not tell how frightened he was when he came after him, and nothing did Toby say about the dropping his lamp and risking the burning up of the shop.

Mr. Fairfax read the story of the murder to Faustine, Irene, and Claude, but the man was unknown to three of the four, and so they took only a passing interest in it, as a tale of horror in their midst.

Claude Avon, however, was most deeply interested, for he knew the Señor Casandra, though he did not take the trouble to say so.

Having led a wild life, and taken to gambling, Claude Avon had lost far oftener than he had won, and squandering thus his own private funds, he had been forced to raise money upon his notes of hand.

He was known to be the heir to Hillcrest Plantation and slaves, when his mother should die, while he, and his sister Irene, had been left a handsome sum at interest for them.

This money he had let go very soon, hypothecating his interest for years ahead, and he had drawn on his sister for her share, while their mother believed, with nothing to use it for, Irene's income was accumulating in the bank.

Nor was this all, for the young profligate had given his notes, secured by Hillcrest Plantation, and the paper Señor Casandra held for nearly thirty thousand dollars, an enormous sum in those days.

Claude Avon knew, according to the will of his father, and grandfather before him, that he forfeited his inheritance if he borrowed money for fast-living and gambling, and that his notes were illegal, and he was most anxious to know just what had become of those papers.

There were many others in the city suffering from the same cause of anxiety, on account of the wounding and robbery of the Señor Casandra, but with Claude Avon's case we have only to do.

The señor was known to keep his important papers in his iron chest, and had they been taken with the treasure, was the all-absorbing question.

If so, into whose hands had they fallen?"

Not being able to answer this important question to his satisfaction, the young planter was in a fever of excitement and suspense, and he rushed right off to the scene of the murder to make what inquiries he could.

He found the shop guarded by a constable, who refused admittance to any one who had no right there.

Claude thought he had a right there, but did not make it known, so he thought the best way to get news was to purchase it.

Slipping a gold eagle into the hand of the constable, when he could do so without the curious crowd seeing his act, he said:

"Officer, I read of the affair in the papers, but did not get at the facts of the case, so kindly answer me a few questions?"

"What would you know, gentleman?" asked the officer, whose opinion of the young man had greatly improved.

"You do not think the dead man was the robber?"

"No, sir, the commandant has proved that."

"Ahem! well, were the entire contents of the iron chest taken?"

"Yes, sir, except some articles."

"Any important papers, you think?"

"If any important papers were there they were either taken by the robber, or secured by the commandant, for I closed the chest, after taking an inventory, and there were no dockyments there, sir, though I does remember now that the chief took some from the floor."

Claude Avon groaned inwardly and departed.

He walked about aimlessly for awhile, and then returned to the hotel, feeling very uneasy in mind.

As he ascended to his room, he met the commandant in the hotel hall, and his heart almost ceased to beat.

The commandant knew him well, bowed coldly, and passed on, while Claude Avon, with a guilty conscience, murmured:

"I am done for."

CHAPTER XXVII.

IRENE'S SECRET.

THE constable was right, for the Commandant of the City Guards had picked up some papers from the floor of Casandra's room, and they lay near the iron chest.

They were marked "Important and Valuable," and Commandant Dick Ogden considered he had the right, in his capacity as chief, to look over them, to see if he could find any clew therein to the murderer's connection with Señor Casandra, and where he might be looked for.

"I wish I could find him without having to annoy that splendid girl," he said, referring to Faustine Fairfax.

Taking the papers home with him that night, after leaving the wounded man in the hands of a doctor and nurse, and constables in charge of

the place, he sat down in his study to look over the papers.

He frowned and smiled by turns, as he came to different papers, according to their tenor, and then said:

"The Spaniard has about half the young bloods of the town indebted to him, ay, and some of the old aristocrats too.

"That is the misfortune of gambling, and living beyond their income.

"Why here in notes, Casandra has a couple of hundred thousand dollars, ranging from a hundred to thirty thousand, I see," and he turned over a paper marked "\$30,000 due one month after coming in possession of estates."

This one paper was folded up tightly, and tied with red tape.

"Who can this be?" mused the commandant, and then he opened the paper.

Instantly his face changed.

"What! has he done this?"

"I knew he was wild, dissipated, and gambled, but I supposed his generous income would support him even in such extravagance.

"No, here is a paper hypothecating his income, giving Casandra an order to draw it from the bank for five years to come, as it becomes due—yes, by Heaven! here is his sister's order too, for that Spaniard to collect her income when due, for two years.

"She has done this to save her brother.

"And this paper is a note for thirty thousand dollars, secured by the plantation and slaves.

"This is a crime, and I am glad I found them."

He placed them in his pocket carefully, and sat down in deep thought.

Then he said aloud:

"Now to this slip I found in the pocket of those clothes left by the murderer," and he took the piece of paper, the same which Redfield had taken from the pocket of the man who was to kill him.

"This proves a plot on the part of Casandra, for this is his writing, and his name signed to it, to kill and rob the man, who turned the tables upon them.

"This paper I will keep, for it will give me a hold upon Casandra, if he recovers.

"Now to see if I, a preventer and punisher of crime, can commit a wrong.

"Let me think it over," and after long and deep meditation he said:

"If Casandra dies, his heirs, whoever they may be, get his riches, and not knowing of these will not miss them.

"If he lives I will tell him I took them, hold this slip of paper against him, with the usurious interest he has charged, in some cases fifty per cent., and tell him to pocket his loss.

"Now I see my way clear to return a debt of gratitude long due."

And the commandant retired to rest, knowing that he needed sleep to prepare him for the busy day that the morning would usher in.

Had Claude Avon, when he met him in the corridor of the hotel, known that he was coming from a visit to his sister he would have quaked with dread; but he believed that he had been to see Mr. Fairfax, to tell him that he, Claude Avon, was not a suitor worthy of his daughter's hand.

But Irene was the one whom the commandant had called to see just then, and she had been surprised when a note was brought to her to please come to the private parlor to see Richard Ogden.

"Why, that is the name of the commandant of the city," she said with surprise to Faustine, who seemed to feel a dread of coming evil at her words and asked:

"Are you sure the note is for you, Irene?"

"Yes; it is so addressed."

"I thought the servant had made a mistake and you had not glanced at the address."

"No; but what can he want with me?"

"Go and see," said Faustine, with a smile.

Irene at once went to the private parlor, and "Richard Ogden," as he signed himself, but "Dick Ogden" to evil doers, came forward to meet her.

He was a handsome man of thirty-five, stern-faced, and with an eye like a hawk.

Well-dressed and well-mannered he was, and most courtly in his bearing toward a woman.

"Miss Avon, I am happy to meet you personally, for your father was my friend, and I trust you will pardon my calling, if only for that reason," he said, in his pleasant way.

"I have nothing to pardon, I assure you, Commandant Ogden, and, as my father's friend, I am glad to meet you, though I confess to surprise and curiosity at your visit; be seated, please."

He led her to a seat and said:

"Miss Avon, let me tell you that circumstances unexpected placed me in possession of a secret known to but two other persons, and I wish now to tell it to you.

"My motive for this interest in you, let me tell you, dates back twenty years, when I landed in this town from an up-river flatboat.

"I had come with my little all, not a dozen dollars and a bag of clothes, a boy of fifteen, to seek my fortune.

"I was set upon by bad men, wounded,

robbed, and I would have been killed, but for your father.

"He was riding by on horseback, saw my danger, and at the risk of his life came to my rescue.

"He had a house in town then and had me taken there and tenderly nursed.

"When I recovered he bought me clothes, gave me some money, and procured for me a position as clerk in the office of an attorney.

"Never would he allow me to repay him my pecuniary debt, and the one of gratitude I could not pay, and when he died I mourned for him as for a father.

"Now you know my motive for what I shall do. These papers, that came into my possession, are orders for a certain man, one Pedro Casandra, to draw, as it comes due, the income of your brother on certain bank investments, for the time of five years. See, I tear it up, and your brother's interest can be drawn from date by himself.

"This paper is of the same kind, for your interest to be drawn from the same source for two years. Did you sign this paper?"

"Oh no, sir!" cried Irene, all in a tremor.

"Is that your signature?"

"It is strangely like it, but I never signed it, and I was going to-day to draw my interest, but my brother told me he had had it sent home to me."

"I see; and, Miss Avon, this signature is a forgery, then?"

"Yes, sir, but—"

"I see that you hesitate, for it comes across your mind as to who is the forger."

"No, no, Claude could never do such a thing."

"Remember, Miss Avon, this secret is between you and me, and I have more to tell you."

"See, this paper is a note for thirty thousand dollars, secured by the plantation and slaves of Hillcrest, and it is signed by your brother, who, by your father's will, which I have examined, has no claim upon it until your mother's death, and forfeits it if he gives a note for any sums so received."

"My poor, poor brother!" groaned Irene.

"I beg you not to grieve, for this is our secret, remember."

"You are so kind, sir, so good to me."

"No, I am repaying the debt I owed your father, and these papers do not cost me a dollar. See, I destroy them all three, and your brother does not owe any money now; he can draw his income, when due, as you can, and both come due to-day, by a strange coincidence."

"But I shall let your brother believe that these papers are held against him, though you see I destroy them, and will tell him his income is safe, but if he is known to go beyond the generous yearly sum allowed him, I will see to it that he is made to suffer, though I would not in reality harm him, as his father's son and your brother. The papers are destroyed, you see, Miss Avon; you must not speak to your brother upon the subject, and the secret remains between us. Good-by, Miss Avon, and remember that Richard Ogden is your friend."

"God bless you!" broke from Irene's lips, as the commandant left her, and going to her room she threw herself upon the bed and burst into tears, until Faustine came in and soothed her, when she said:

"Faustine, I, too, have a secret."

And she told it to her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MADNESS OR TRICKERY.

THE second day after the murder in the shop of the Señor Casandra, the coroner's jury found that the dead man came to his death at the hands of a party or parties unknown, and that Pedro Casandra lay at the point of death from a wound inflicted by the said murderer, or murderers.

This was already known to the public, but of course a verdict had to be found by a coroner's jury.

That same day Claude Avon, who was looking pale and anxious from a cause he cared not to make known, received a communication that seemed to interest him deeply.

It read simply:

"CLAUDE AVON, Planter:—

"SIR:—I have in my possession papers that are by no means creditable to you as a young gentleman, and the exposure of which would send you to prison."

"Said papers consist in a note you gave to Pedro Casandra for thirty thousand dollars for money loaned, and which note was secured by property not your own, until the death of your mother, and to be given to charity should you break certain terms of the will left by your father."

"Another paper hypothecates your income for five years."

"A third paper, a direct forgery, hypothecates your sister's income for two years, and you have been deceiving her in regard to it."

"As an old friend of your father, I have taken up these papers, and you can draw your income as before, when due."

"If you dare to draw one dollar of your sister's income I shall know it, and will use the papers against you."

"If you dare to hypothecate your income again, it will be known to me, and you shall be prosecuted by these papers."

"If you give a note, secured by property not your own, these papers shall be used against you."

"You are in my power, Mr. Claude Avon, and you shall be closely watched, and I warn you to beware of gambling-dens and cards."

"I warn you against drink, for under its influence you may do things that will send you to prison."

"My eye, and the sleepless eye of the law is upon you, so be warned in time."

"Live honestly, squarely, and live down your dishonor."

"Do not speak to your sister upon what I write to you of, and thus place yourself in a bad light before her."

"Live as I demand, and all will be well."

"Go astray, and woe be unto you."

"ONE WHO WISHES YOU WELL."

This strange letter Claude read over and over again, until he knew it by heart.

"I've got to turn over a new leaf, that is certain, for I am watched."

"But who writes this letter, who has paid so large a sum for my paper?"

"Some foe, I should think, to ruin me, rather than a friend, for I have no such friends."

"Well, I'm going to lead a different life, that is certain," and destroying the letter, Claude sauntered forth for a walk, feeling very ill at ease, and fearing that every familiar face he saw was the writer of the letter.

As he came into the hotel again he met Mr. Fairfax, who said to him:

"Ah, Claude, I wished to see you, to say that any purchases you wished to make, or business you had to look after, must be done to-day, for we sail day after to-morrow morning early, and to-morrow is Sunday, you know."

"So it is, sir, and I shall go down to my banker's and get some money."

"Your sister has just gone there to draw her income, and Faustine went with her, so you will doubtless meet them there."

Claude started from a guilty conscience, and said he would go and meet them, but he had no idea of doing so.

He wanted to know if Irene got her money, and if so, he knew his would be there for him, and that the letter had told the truth.

In the mean time Mr. Cenas had sent up his card to Mr. Fairfax, who was looking for him, and just then spied him talking to Captain Le Roy, so the planter hung back, not willing to accost the young captain after his conduct of several days before.

But to his surprise, Fred Le Roy caught his eye, smiled, and came toward him, saying:

"My dear Mr. Fairfax, this is a pleasure unlooked for, as I supposed you had left the city."

He grasped the planter's hand, the latter seeming to be amazed, while Mr. Cenas said audibly, with more emphasis than elegance:

"Well, I'll be hanged if that don't beat all I ever saw!"

Mr. Fairfax, recovering himself, cast a triumphant look at his planter friend, as if to say:

"I told you so! See, he knows me to-day, so you must feel as I do, that he is mad as a March hare."

But he said, pleasantly:

"Yes, captain, we are still in the city, but sail on Monday morning for home."

"You will dine with us to-night, will you not?"

"I would like to suggest, as I will have to return on board ship, that you come aboard and dine with me, Mr. Fairfax, bringing the ladies, of course, and your young friend, Avon?"

"And you will include the commodore, of course?"

"Any friend of yours, Mr. Fairfax, is welcome, I assure you."

"But I refer to your old friend here, Commodore Cenas," and the planter turned to Commodore Cenas, who was standing near, seeming to be half-dazed, as he listened to what had been said.

"Ah! this gentleman; but I have not had the honor of his acquaintance before just now, when he met me as though an old friend."

"Oh, Lord! his brain is wrecked," groaned the commodore, while he said:

"Yes, I mistook the gentleman for my friend Captain Fred Le Roy, and—"

"I am Fred Le Roy, sir."

"Of the cruiser *Bride of the Wind*?"

"Yes, sir, such is the name of my vessel."

"And yet you do not know me?"

"We never met before, sir, to my knowledge; but if you are the friend of Mr. Fairfax, I am glad to meet you, and shall be honored if you will dine with me to-night on my schooner."

"No, sir, no, sir, I cannot, I thank you, for I must go home, and at once," and the commodore spoke excitedly.

"And I must run off now, Mr. Fairfax, but give my regards to the ladies, and Mr. Avon, and I shall expect you surely."

"Good-morning, gentlemen."

He raised his cap politely and walked away, while the commodore said:

"Duncan Fairfax, what does that mean?"

"He is evidently insane, Cenas."

"Crazy, sir, crazy is the word. Why I thought he had left port night before last, as he said he was going, and seeing him here just now, I ran up to him, slapped him on the back and said:

"Oh, you sly dog?"

"I shall never forget his look, for his eyes blazed, while he said sternly:

"But for your white hair, sir, I should punish you for your impudence."

"I was astounded, and said:

"My dear, dear Fred, do not be angry, for as you told me you were going away, I supposed you were gone, and seeing you still in port supposed some bright eyes had kept you here."

"You are excusable, sir; but you have made a mistake, as I have never before met you," was his reply and just then he saw you and walked toward you.

"The other day he did not know you, and now he denies knowing me."

"That man should be looked to, Fairfax, and I wish you would ask his officers what they think about his remarkable case, for he ought to be relieved from command, poor fellow."

"I am as bewildered as you are, commodore; but will you not go on board with us and see for yourself?"

"Not I, for this has been a real shock to me, which I cannot get over readily."

After some further conversation upon the strange conduct of Fred Le Roy, the old friends parted, when they had indulged in a mint-julep to steady their nerves.

Going to his private parlor Mr. Fairfax found the maidens there, they having just returned from down-town, and he asked:

"Did you not see Claude?"

"Yes; we met him on our way to the bank, and he has gone there to draw some money," answered Irene.

"But who else do you think we met, father?" asked Faustine.

"Who was it, my child?"

"Captain Le Roy."

"No!"

"Yes."

"And he knew you?" asked the planter, quickly.

"Yes, indeed; and he told us he had just seen you and left an invitation for us all to dine with him to-night on board ship."

"So he asked me."

"And you will go?"

"What do you say, girls?"

"I say yes," cried Irene.

"Ditto," called out Faustine.

"Well, we will go, but, ten to one I'll wager that when we get there he'll not know one of us and swear he never saw us before."

"Why, father?"

"Well, old Commodore Cenas, whom he served with as a middy, whacked him on the back a while ago and called him a sly dog, as Le Roy had told him he intended to leave town, and the commodore supposed he had gone."

"Le Roy got mad and swore he had never seen the commodore before."

"Oh, father!"

"Fact; and as I came up the young captain greeted me cordially, said he did not know the commodore at all, asked after you girls and Claude, and invited us all, Cenas as my friend, on board his schooner."

"This is terrible, father."

"Perhaps we had better not go, Mr. Fairfax," said Irene.

"Oh, yes; we'll go, and if he don't know us, we'll come away again; but here is Claude."

Claude Avon entered looking in better humor.

He had drawn his income, though he thought the cashier eyed him closely, such was his guilty conscience. Faustine had heard the story of wrong-doing, for Irene had kept back nothing, and yet she treated him in the same, kind sisterly way as before, and by which she hoped to show him that the regard of a sister was all that she could ever have for him.

He heard the proposition to dine on the *Bride of the Wind* with a shake of the head, and said:

"I wonder if he will know us?"

"So father said; but we will go and see."

And they went, though the hearts of all beat more rapidly as they drove down to the river, wondering what strange freak the young captain might be taken with upon their arrival.

But they saw the schooner's long-boat coming ashore for them, and Captain Le Roy met them at the gangway, and never before had they seen him more fascinating.

But all efforts of the planter to make him remember Commodore Cenas were in vain; he could not recall ever meeting him before, and the hints he threw out to the officers of the schooner met with no satisfaction.

After several hours passed on board most delightfully, when Fred Le Roy sung for them, in a voice that they confessed they had never heard equaled, the party took their departure.

Arriving at the hotel, Faustine missed her bracelet set with gems, and an heirloom in the family, handed down from her great-grandmother, and also most valuable in an intrinsic view, and the planter said:

"We will drive back at once to the landing, and you, Claude, can get a shore-boat and go on board the schooner, for it was dropped either in the cabin or on the long-boat coming ashore."

"I guess it will be found in the cabin, sir, for I remember seeing it on Faustine's arm

when she was playing that Spanish sailor song for Le Roy, and it is doubtless in the state-room where you girls put on your wraps."

"I hope so, and, you dear good Claude, find it for me, I beg of you, for I believe I would rather lose my inheritance than that bracelet, and I should not have worn it, as it needed a new clasp."

"I'll do my best, Faustine, so don't worry," and Claude sprung from the carriage.

But he stopped, looked about him and said:

"Driver, you did not bring us to the right place."

"Yas, sah, this am the place."

"Then where is the schooner?"

"She done gone, sah."

"What is it, Claude?" called out the planter.

"The schooner is not here, sir."

"What do you say?"

"The *Bride of the Wind* is gone, Mr. Fairfax."

"Impossible!" and the planter sprung out of the carriage.

"She has gone, sir."

"Yes, this is where we boarded her, and landed. She has surely gone, Claude," said the perplexed planter.

"She has indeed, sir," and Claude strained his eyes in a vain effort to find the missing vessel.

"It has been just fifteen minutes since we left this spot, and we return to find the schooner gone," said Mr. Fairfax, looking at his watch by the carriage-lamp.

All looked at each other for an explanation of the mystery, but none could be found.

But surely the *Bride of the Wind* had disappeared most mysteriously, and in thoughtful mood all returned to the hotel, while over and over again Faustine asked herself:

"What does it mean?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE COMMANDANT'S VISIT.

IN the murder of a man in the shop of Señor Pedro Casandra, and the severe wounding of that strange personage the public had a nine-days' wonder upon which to feast their morbid curiosity.

The coroner's inquest having pronounced the murdered man "dead," he was carried to his grave amid great demonstrations from curious sympathizers, and a stranger coming into the city and seeing the crowds and large procession, supposed some great man had suddenly gone to his fathers.

But morbid curiosity can never be squelched, and so the unknown man was taken to the tomb in grander style than in life he had ever anticipated.

At his home lay Pedro Casandra, improving, the doctors said, yet still clinging to life by a thread.

Everything had been done for him, that science could do, and unless brain fever set in, or inflammation of the fractured skull, he would pull through, for he had a constitution of iron.

He still remained, however, in a comatose state, and no information could be gleaned from him for some time.

Discovering this fact Commandant Ogden decided to carry out his first intention to get to the bottom facts, as to who was the murderer, and so Faustine, on Sunday morning, while seated in Irene's room, bemoaning the loss of her bracelet the night before, received a note which requested her to give an audience alone, in the private parlor, to Commandant Ogden.

Faustine had had so much of sorrow and worry, that she turned pale as she handed the note to Irene.

"Go by all means," said Irene, and she added:

"He is such a noble man, Faustine."

"Yes, I liked him the night I saw him at the *carcel*; but what can he want with me now?"

"I wonder if harm has befallen Redfield?"

Irene made no reply, for she felt a trifle anxious about the visit of the commandant, and Faustine left the room.

Richard Ogden bowed with courtly grace as she entered, and said in his low, pleasant way:

"I regret to intrude, Miss Fairfax, but I come to have a little talk with you."

"Be seated, Commandant Ogden," said Faustine.

"You of course recall the circumstances under which we met?"

"It was at the *carcel*, sir."

"Yes, when you came to say that you would not appear against a prisoner, Heinrich Hammel."

"True, sir."

"Would you mind telling me why you had him arrested?"

"Why would you know?"

"I have a motive which I will afterward explain, Miss Fairfax."

"I thought I recognized in him one who was my bitter enemy."

"And was not such the case?"

"How do you mean?"

"Was he not your enemy?"

"Yes."

"But not as Heinrich Hammel."

"As who, then?" she asked quickly.

"That is what I wish you to tell me, mademoiselle."

"I care not to do so."

"You know what his name is?"

"I do."

"And I know that he was in disguise."

"Ah!"

"Yes, for I suspected him, and I tore off his false beard and wig."

"Indeed!"

"I did, Miss Fairfax."

"And you recognized him, sir?"

"I had never seen him before, to my knowledge."

"Did you know who he was?"

"How could I, not knowing him?"

"I mean did you learn his name?"

"It was not Hammel, then?"

"You know that much."

"Will you not tell me his real name?"

"Do you pledge me your word you do not know, sir?"

"I do."

"Then I will not tell you."

"Ah! you caught me there, Miss Fairfax."

"I meant not to do so, nor do I mean this as a fencing-match with foils."

"Then let me be frank with you and hope that you may be the same with me, Miss Fairfax."

"Candor begets candor, it is said, Commandant Ogden."

"Then I will set the example by saying that I unmasked the man, feeling that he was a villain."

"You are a good reader of human nature, sir."

"Thank you, but I thought I recognized in him a bad, fearless man, and I wished to see his face as it really was."

"How did it impress you, may I ask?"

"Most favorably, for he is a very handsome man, and has just the face to win a woman's love."

"His face I studied well, and I would know it again saw I it anywhere."

"I saw that it was the face of a man who had been reared a gentleman, whatever he might have become afterward, and I read the tie that bound you to him as that of love in the past, and a determination upon his part either to win you or persecute you."

"You read well, sir, permit me to again say."

"I therefore came to you, Miss Fairfax, to ask you to give me what information you can about the man."

"And I refuse, sir."

"Then I must find out."

"How can you?"

"I believe you have been at boarding-school North, and only lately returned?"

"I have, sir."

"By going, or sending a trusty man to New York, I can find out regarding just what lovers you had, how you regarded them, and which one has gone to the bad."

"I can get descriptions of your visitors, and compare such descriptions with the face of the man who called himself Heinrich Hammel."

"You were well selected for the place you hold, Commandant Ogden, and I congratulate the authorities upon their selection of a man such as you."

"Is this satire, Miss Fairfax?"

"Indeed no, for you amaze me at the manner in which you go about finding out what you would know."

"This case calls for much trouble, Miss Fairfax."

"Ah! I thought my not making a charge against the prisoner dismissed the case."

"It did on that arrest."

"Ah! has he been arrested again?" quickly asked Faustine, and the commandant saw that her face paled.

"No, and I only wish he had been."

"What has he been guilty of now?" asked Faustine sadly.

"May I ask, and will you pardon me for so doing, if that man is aught to you now?"

"No."

"You do not care for him, then?"

"On the contrary, I detest him."

"I am heartily glad to hear this."

"I asked you if he had committed any other crime after his promise to me--"

She paused quickly, but he had caught her words, and said:

"Then you let him go free on the faith of his solemn promise?"

"I did."

"May I ask what he promised?"

"To leave the city and to cross my path no more."

"If he has kept the first promise I regret it, but I am sure he has kept the last."

"Yes, I have not seen him since; but you have not answered my question, sir."

"If he has been guilty of more wrongdoing?"

"Yes."

"He has."

"I feared it, though I hoped not."

"His heart is too bad, Miss Fairfax, for him ever to do a good act."

"Alas! I fear so."
 "He committed crimes not two hours after leaving the prison."
 "Crimes?"
 "Yes."
 "Then more than one?"
 "Yes, three."
 "Great heaven, pity him!"
 "He is unworthy of heavenly pity."
 "What has he done?" and she asked the question in a low, sad voice.
 "You heard of the wounding of one Señor Pedro Casandra?"
 She started and answered in a whisper:
 "Yes."
 "And the robbery of his iron chest?"
 "Yes," came in the same low whisper.
 "And the murder, in Casandra's shop of an unknown man, but the friend of the Spaniard?"
 "Yes."
 "The man you set free, Miss Fairfax, wounded Casandra, robbed him, and murdered his friend."

A low moan escaped the lips of Faustine Fairfax, and she was very white-faced; but she uttered no word for full a minute, while the commandant sat regarding her with his keen eyes.

Then she said:
 "How know you this, sir?"
 "He left his professor's clothing, false beard, wig, spectacles and hat in the room where the murder was committed."
 "These seem like conclusive proofs."
 "Yes, especially when I found in the pocket of the coat he wore as a prisoner, this note."
 She took the note he handed to her and opened it, for it was merely folded, and addressed to her.

Then she read in French:
 "Will Miss Fairfax kindly grant an interview, in the absence of her father, an interview with her father's old tutor?"
 HEINRICH HAMMEL.

"Alas! this is indeed conclusive, for he wrote this note at the hotel to send to me, as he said, when he sent his card instead; but what was the motive of the attack on the Spaniard and his friend?"

"Perhaps they attacked him first, and he got the best of them both."

"Then it was in self-defense?" eagerly said Faustine.

"Perhaps so, but even with that he robbed the Spaniard after he thought he had killed him, and he must have gone there prepared for real work."

"And what is it you wish of me, sir?"

"To aid me to bring that man to the gallows."

"I will not do it, sir," she said firmly.

"If you would tell me his name, his haunts, and all you know about him, I could run him to earth."

"Not one word shall you get from me to aid you."

"Yet you said but now that you detested him?"

"True, but I will not feel that I have done one act to place the hangman's noose about his neck."

"As you please, Miss Fairfax; but I am sorry you so decide."

"My decision is irrevocable, Commandant Ogden."

"Then I must work in my own way to accomplish the end I seek, and I shall, if successful, feel glad to have removed from your path an enemy."

"Thank you, sir."

The commandant arose, and Faustine held out her hand, which he grasped warmly and then took his departure, leaving the poor girl with a still deeper grief at her heart, and she hastened back to her room to tell Irene all that had occurred.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FRUITLESS ERRAND.

THE Arrow had been overhauled while in the city, and Leon had been given *carte blanche* to get her out in the best style, so that she was in excellent trim when Mr. Fairfax and his party went on board Monday morning.

The stores purchased had been put away in the hold, and looking well the lugger headed down the river.

She had a fair breeze, and with Leon at the helm made good time, while the planter and the others sat upon deck in easy-chairs, enjoying the scenery along the river-banks.

Mr. Fairfax told Leon to work in toward the shore, where there was a plantation landing, with the mansion standing back among orange trees and magnolias.

The owner was an intimate of Duncan Fairfax, and the party stopped here to dinner and then continued on their way after a delightful stay of several hours.

The next morning, when Faustine and Irene came on deck, they found that they were in the blue waters of the Gulf, with the land hardly visible astern.

The wind was light, the sea placid, and the planter and Leon were discussing the appearance of a vessel in the distance.

"Good-morning, young ladies," said the planter cheerily, and then he attracted their attention to the distant sail.

"Leon says it is the Bride of the Wind," said Mr. Fairfax.

"And how is she heading, Leon?" asked Faustine.

"We will pass within a mile of her, missy, if we both hold our present course," answered the pilot.

"I hope so, for we can signal and find out if my bracelet was found on board," Faustine remarked.

Claude soon after came on deck, being always lazy about rising in the morning, and the wind being very light, breakfast was served beneath an awning on deck.

The Arrow moved slowly on her way, and, but that the Bride of the Wind was making four knots out of a two-knot breeze, night would have come on before the two vessels got near enough to speak each other.

"We are going to have a dead calm, master," said Leon, who was watching the sails that barely filled with the light breeze.

"It looks so, Leon, and we are yet three miles from the schooner."

"She is becalmed now, sir," and they could see the schooner rising and falling upon the swell, utterly becalmed.

Soon the lugger's sails flapped against the mast, and Leon, as oracle, said there would be no wind until sunset, if then.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Claude Avon.

All wanted to know what exertion he meant to make in that hot air.

"I'll have two of the boys row me to the schooner, and—"

"Take a drink with the captain, eh?"

"Yes, Mr. Fairfax, I may do that; but as we can do nothing, and when a breeze comes we may be separated from the schooner, I will row over there and get Faustine's bracelet."

"Ob, Claude! you are inspired," cried Irene.

"And it is so good of you, Claude, and I will be full of gratitude if you go," Faustine said, while Leon muttered to himself:

"Yes, and Master Claude will be full of mint-juleps if he goes."

Leon knew the young planter's weakness on the score of juleps.

So two of the negro crew got out the gig, and Claude stepped into it, and away the boat went with a lazy pull over the placid waters.

The gig had an awning, and so the young planter and the men were sheltered from the fierce rays of the sun.

Lolling in hammocks on the deck of the lugger, the maidens watched the receding boat, saw the oarsmen rest on their oars, then go alongside the schooner and Claude go on board, and presently disappear from view.

He was absent but a few minutes, when he reappeared, approached the ship's side and descended into his gig.

"Why he has not stayed long," said the planter.

"No, he has doubtless found the bracelet and hastened back to relieve your mind," Irene remarked.

"Maybe the captain has one of his attacks again," suggested Faustine.

Let us follow the gig and see just what the cause of Claude's short stay on board was.

Arriving near the schooner he saw not a human being visible.

She rose and fell on the swell, and her sails flapped to and fro.

"She seems deserted," he said.

"Guess all hands is asleep, young massa," said one of the oarsmen.

"Well, we will wake them up, so give way again, boys."

As the boat approached nearer, a sharp hail cut the still air:

"Boat ahoy!"

"Ay, ay, sir, I would like to come on board to see your commander."

"All right, come alongside."

"They are not so fast asleep as we supposed," muttered Claude, and a moment after he went over the side of the beautiful vessel.

A young officer met him at the gangway, and seeing a gentleman bowed politely, while he said:

"Your name, please, and I will see if Captain Le Roy will give you an audience."

"My name is Claude Avon, and I am a friend of your captain," said Claude, not remembering to have before seen the young officer.

The midshipman went to the after deck, spoke a word with an officer there, seated under an awning, and then descended to the cabin.

"Captain Le Roy will see you, sir," he said, upon his return, and Claude followed the midshipman, and descended into the cabin.

There sat the young commander of the Bride of the Wind, looking over a chart of the coast.

"Hello, Captain Le Roy, I know I have surprised you," said Claude, stepping forward with hand extended.

The captain arose, his face wore a look of surprise, and not noticing the extended hand he said:

"You have indeed, sir, and I would like to know why I am honored with this visit, after

our last meeting in the box at the theater which was by no means a pleasant one?"

"Got 'em again," muttered Claude, in whose mind there was a legend well remembered that drinking people got "something" that sober people were not afflicted with.

But he said aloud:

"My dear Le Roy, in the name of Heaven, what ails you?"

"If I must be plain, sir, I will tell you that I am horridly bored."

Claude Avon's face flushed with anger, for he was quick to understand and resent an insult, and yet it came across his mind that the man must be mad, so he said:

"I shall depart, Captain Le Roy, and not trouble you again with my society, as soon as I learn from you if Miss Fairfax left her diamond bracelet here the other day when we all dined with you?"

"My dear sir, you speak in riddles, for I know not the lady to whom you refer, though both she and her father have done me the honor to say that I have done them great service, and they never dined with me, nor do I know aught of the lady's diamond bracelet."

"Why, captain, I dined on your schooner myself."

"When?"

"Last Saturday off New Orleans."

"You are mistaken, sir."

Claude smiled, and it was a pitying smile.

"Do you come from the lugger becalmed a league away?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is she?"

"The pleasure craft of Planter Fairfax, as you should know."

"I did not know, sir, but I shall in future know her so well as to avoid her as a merchantman would a buccaneer, for she seems to be a floating lunatic asylum."

"You are insulting, sir," hotly said Claude.

"Pardon me, I should have known better than to be rude to one afflicted with lunacy."

"Pray let me call my surgeon, for he is a specialist in diseases of the mind, and he may help you, while, if you wish it, he can return with you to the lugger and prescribe for your friends."

Claude Avon was white with anger, but believing that he was talking to a lunatic he controlled himself and bowing, said:

"Good-day, Captain Le Roy."

The young captain smiled and bowed, and Claude took his leave.

"Young gentleman, has your captain been subject to these attacks long?" he asked of the midshipman, who escorted him to the gangway.

"What attacks, sir?"

"Non compos mentis," and Claude tapped his head, significantly.

"Crazy people always think that other people are lunny," said the midshipman, with warmth.

"Well my opinion is that this is one of Uncle Sam's insane asylums afloat," muttered the young planter, as he returned to his boat, and said in a gruff tone:

"Pull for the lugger, boys."

"Guesses ther cap'n wasn't very hospitable, young massa?" said one of the negro barmen, after a while.

"Why, Caesar?"

"Cause I doesn't smell no julep, sah, on yer bref."

"You are right, Caesar, he was not very social; but the poor fellow has mind trouble, and I forgive him."

"I'd be afeerd o' him, sah, as he has a ship ter slash around loose in."

"Yes, the Government should be informed of his infirmity before he does some terrible deed."

Arriving at the lugger, all saw by his face that he had not enjoyed himself.

"Has he got 'em again, Claude?" asked the planter.

"Oh! has he got my bracelet?" asked Faustine, not understanding her father's allusion.

"No, Faustine, he has not got the bracelet, but he's away off."

"Not on his vessel then?"

"Oh, yes, on his vessel, but off in his mind; he's as crazy as he can be."

Then Claude told the story of his visit, and at first indignant, all indignation after a while turned to pity for the young sailor, and the young planter was sympathized with for his fruitless errand, while Faustine gave her bracelet up as lost.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LOST BRACELET.

THE wind, according to Leon's prediction, came up with the sunset, and the lugger started on her way at a lively pace, as though refreshed by her long rest in the calm.

The schooner also caught the breeze, and, as though anxious to keep at a distance from the lugger, went flying away under a cloud of canvas, and was soon lost to sight in the darkness.

Toward "four bells" the moon arose, and the wind held steady at a fair seven-knot breeze, making the sail a most enjoyable one.

The party sat on deck enjoying the beauty of

the night, and Faustine and Irene sung, accompanying themselves upon the guitar.

The planter then called upon Leon for a song, and a chorus from the crew, and Claude took the helm as the negroes sat amidsthips in a group and made the waters ring with their fine voices.

"Bravo! bravo!"

The voice came across the waters, from astern, and all on board the lugger rose to their feet in an instant, the negroes cowering with superstitious dread.

"A vessel!" cried Faustine, glancing directly astern, and beholding a craft not two cables' length distant, which had silently overhauled them unnoticed.

Leon sprung to the helm, and the face of Faustine blanched, as her first thought was of Redfield Romer.

But again was heard the voice, and this time in a hail:

"Ho! the Arrow ahoy!"

"Le Roy!" cried Claude Avon.

"Yes, it is his voice," the planter remarked, while as, in the excitement, no one had answered, Faustine called out:

"Ahoy! the Bride of the Wind!"

"Will you lay to, as I desire to come on board on an important mission?"

"Ay, ay, sir," returned the planter, and Leon swept up into the wind with his craft.

"Now what do you make of that?" asked Claude Avon.

"I do not know what to say," Faustine returned.

"He's gotten over his attack, it seems," the planter remarked.

"I hope he'll stay cured," and Irene laughed.

The schooner in the meantime came on with a rush, as though the sound of a thousand wings in the air, and sweeping up with a rush, lay quietly upon the waters.

A boat soon left her side, and as she drew near, Mr. Fairfax whispered:

"Do not remind the poor fellow of Claude's visit to him, unless he speaks of it himself."

"I'll be as silent as an oyster," said Claude.

A moment more and the tall, splendid form of Le Roy bounded upon deck.

Raising his cap he came aft and greeted them in the friendliest manner, while he said:

"Miss Faustine, I have something here which I think you will be glad to get."

"My bracelet!" cried Faustine.

"Yes, I noticed it when at breakfast the next morning, as it lay in a corner where it had rolled, having fallen from your arm, doubtless, as the clasp is worn."

"Its glitter caught my eye, and I recognized it at once as yours."

"I am so glad to get it again, Captain Le Roy, and I know not how to thank you," and Faustine held out her hand in her warm-hearted way.

"I am thanked in the joy it gives you, Miss Faustine, and I was only sorry that I was compelled to leave so hastily that night, and go to sea before I discovered it."

"But an hour ago one of my officers reported a sail, and recognizing your lugger as I thought, I gave chase; in fact I am here in these waters to see every craft and know its business."

"As I drew nearer I heard your voice, Miss Faustine, coming far across the waters, as clear and sweet as the notes of a flute, and then the crew began to sing, and being within hail, I called out bravo."

"Bound home, I suppose you are?"

"Yes, captain, where I hope to have the pleasure of entertaining you, some day."

"I hope that I will have that pleasure, Mr. Fairfax, but let me suggest that you keep a bright lookout, as I have met several coasting vessels that report a pirate abroad."

"A pirate?" cried Faustine.

"Yes, but do not be alarmed, Miss Fairfax, as I am on the watch for him, and, from all accounts he very much resembles the little schooner Bother, but as I have some twenty men from that craft now on my vessel, and I saw her wrecked, the reported buccaneer cannot be that one."

Faustine was silent, for she dreaded that Redfield Romer was again at sea, though Leon had reported his vessel wrecked.

After a chat of half an hour, and the hope that they would meet again, Le Roy took his leave and the two vessels once more held on their way, the Bride of the Wind standing in toward the coast, while Leon heaved further out into open waters.

Until after midnight the party sat on deck, talking over the strange man who had just left them, and wondering at the strange freak of madness that seemed to possess him at times.

At last the two maidens retired, but Mr. Fairfax, and Claude, being anxious, remained on deck until nearly dawn, when Leon, who had been getting a few hours' sleep, returned and took the helm.

When the party assembled on deck in the morning, the land was not in sight, and far off in the horizon a single sail was visible.

"How is she heading, Leon?"

"Toward us."

"Can it be the Bride of the Wind?"

"Hardly, sir, unless she doubled on us."

"She has the speed to do that with this eight-knot breeze?"

"Yes, sir, she could do it, master."

"Yonder craft is a schooner, as my glass shows."

"Yes, sir."

"She seems to be rising rapidly, Leon?"

"She has more wind there, master, than we have."

"May it reach us before she does," said the planter, earnestly.

"I think I had better head in-shore, master."

"Well?"

"We will get the wind a little better, than heading close as we are now, sir."

"Do so, Leon."

"And we can about hit, among the islands, the channels of which I know, and perhaps her skipper does not, master, if he should prove to be a pirate."

"You are right, Leon, so change the course to suit yourself."

This was done, the lugger falling off half a dozen points, and increasing her speed somewhat more than when she pointed close.

The land was sighted soon after, but the strange sail was rising rapidly, and as it drew nearer Leon called to the planter to approach the helm.

"Well, señor?"

"She's a schooner-of-war sir."

"And not a pirate?"

"That I don't know, sir."

"She certainly is not the Bride of the Wind?"

"No, master, she's smaller."

"Leon, you seem to have an idea as to what that craft is?"

"Master, when I was on board the Bride of the Wind, sir, with Captain Le Roy, we saw a pirate schooner down, sir."

"Yes."

"She ran on a wreck and went to pieces."

"I remember."

"The captain took off her crew, and the men of the Bride of the Wind got what was valuable from the wreck."

"Well, Leon?"

"Master, as I see yonder craft, sir, and I hain't no superstitious fool, as you knows, sir, it's the same schooner that was wrecked!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE LUGGER AT BAY.

As the strange sail came nearer, it was evident that Leon was very much in earnest about its being the counterpart of the schooner which he had seen wrecked.

"Master, I watched that craft when she was broadside to us, when she came sneaking out from the island and chased us."

"I watched her with the glass when she followed us through the channel, sir, of the Devil's Chain, and again when I was on board Captain Le Roy's vessel in chase of her, and if that hain't the same vessel, why then it's her ghost."

"Nonsense, Leon, don't you get that crazy idea into your head and frighten the crew," said the planter.

"I don't intend to scare 'em, master, but I have my own mind set, sir, for two vessels can't be so much alike, and right in these waters too."

"Well, she is gaining rapidly, so what is to be done?"

"Dodge her among the islands, sir."

"But suppose she has a pilot, too?"

"Well, sir, if she's a ghost craft, why she can follow us anywhere; but if she's a pirate we can dodge her unless—"

"Unless what, Leon?"

"Unless she has a pilot on board."

"What then?"

"If he knows the island channels, sir, he can follow us."

"And then?"

"We've got to give up, sir, or fight."

"To fight would be nonsense, against such a force."

"Maybe, master; but let us wait and see what she is and means toward us, and then we perhaps can fight her, if we have to."

"It would be sheer desperation."

"Not if we held the position, master."

"You know of a good position?"

"Yes, master, but I don't wish to go there unless we have to."

"I see; well, we will wait until we know what yonder fellow means— Hal there comes a shot, and that don't look ghostly, Leon."

"No, sir, that's human," and Leon's face brightened as he felt that he had man to deal with and not something of a supernatural order.

The ball did not reach, but it came as a line-shot and was well intended.

Instantly it decided the planter upon his course, and he said:

"Leon, can we reach that place of defense, think you, before the schooner gets within range?"

"Before she gets too close, sir, for yonder are the islands, and it's not over an hour's run."

"Then head for it, and tell me your plan as you go, for see yonder?"

As the planter spoke another shot came from

the schooner, now thoroughly in chase of the lugger, and up to her peak went a black flag.

"A pirate," cried Irene.

"It is the Bother!" groaned Faustine.

"But the Bother was wrecked, missy."

"It was, Leon, you said; but that surely is the vessel that sailed into New York Harbor, that dogged the Gulf Queen's wake and kidnapped me from her."

"Master, do you hear that?" cried Leon.

"Yes, and she has looked so to me, but I did not care to admit it."

"If it is not the Bother, father, and how could it be, it is her counterpart."

"And a pirate," said Irene.

"We will have to fight for it, no matter what the odds are," pluckily said Claude Avon.

"That's the talk, Master Claude, and I am heading now to where we can make a good fight, sir."

"Where is that, Leon?" asked Faustine.

"See that island, missy?"

"The one with the tall pine on it?"

"Yes, missy."

"Well, Leon?"

"See that high cliff this side?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is a quarter of a mile from the island, and off to itself, though the reefs are all about it, and there's only one way to get there, even in a row-boat."

"We'll run right in, and that cliff shelters a basin big enough for this lugger, and we can lay her broadside to the channel, so as to defend the Arrow against 'em coming in."

"But the schooner would run in with her heavy guns, and—"

"There's not water enough for the schooner, missy, and there's no place where she can lay and hit us with her guns, though she might knock dirt off of the cliff on top of us."

"And what then?" asked Claude.

"Well, young master, the schooner would send her boats in, and for two cables' length they'd have to come right up under our fire."

"If they went one side or the other, out of the channel, they'd be knocked to pieces with the rocks, and if they have not a good pilot they can't come in, while we can lay there safe as a bug in a rug."

"Stand a siege of it, eh, Leon?" asked the planter.

"It won't last long, for we can keep firing, and some cruiser, perhaps the Bride of the Wind, will hear our firing and come to us."

"The very thing, Leon; but we are few to defend the lugger against the schooner's boats."

"Master, there's you and Master Claude, me and the boys, making eleven."

"Then there's the cook and cabin steward, counting us thirteen, while we have on board twenty-four muskets and as many pistols and cutlasses, with the two new long-range rifles you bought in the city the other day."

"Then there's our six-pounder brass piece yonder, and we can fire it, then the thirteen muskets, and have the balance loaded to fire again right off, and Missy Faustine, Missy Irene and Silvy and Lucy can load for us."

"Leon, you are a born soldier, and with the aid of the young ladies and their maids, I believe we can beat those boats off," and Mr. Fairfax seemed to be greatly cheered by the prospect.

The muskets were now brought on deck, along with the other arms, and the young ladies and Silvy and Lucy watched the process of loading very attentively, Claude being the instructor.

The little gun, a six-pounder, was gotten ready, and all preparations were made for a bold resistance of the schooner.

The stranger in the mean time kept on in pursuit, gaining steadily, and firing slowly, though none of the shots took effect, except one passed through a topsail.

The reefs were now reached, and skillfully threading his way through the dangers upon all sides, Leon headed for the cliff.

Passing into a sheet of water that was encircled by a chain of reefs, it at first seemed to be deep and free from rocks; but Leon called out:

"Look to starboard, please, masters and misses."

All did so, and they could see that the lugger was running alongside of what appeared to be a sunken wall, beyond which rocks were visible just topping the waters.

"Now to port," called out the pilot, and the same scene was presented upon the other side, and the Arrow could be seen to be gliding through a channel barely double her width.

Ahead was the cliff, and as he approached it, Leon looked back to see if the schooner had entered the first chain of reefs.

"She's got a pilot, master, for she's running in among the islands."

"Then she will follow us?"

"Up to back yonder, sir, and then she'll anchor and send her boats in."

"All right, Leon, I think we can beat them off," hopefully said the planter.

"I hope so, master," was the earnest response, and Leon watched his course ahead.

All saw that the lugger was going through a most dangerous channel, and not a word was spoken to the daring helmsman.

Beads of perspiration stood upon his face, and he spoke only in a low voice, when giving his orders to his crew, and a man stood at each sheet-rop, obeying the slightest word with promptness, whether to haul taut or slack off, as the winding of the channel demanded.

The schooner still kept up her fire, but either from poor marksmanship, or a desire not to injure the lugger, the shots flew wild.

But it was certain she was following in the Arrow's wake and meant to come as far as she could.

Drawing nearer, Faustine was convinced that it was the counterpart of the Bother, and really began to think that the craft that Leon had seen wrecked was not that of Redfield Romer.

She had not asked the Outlawed Cadet how he had escaped the wreck when she saw him in the New Orleans *carcel*, and was now assured that it had not been the Bother that had driven to destruction upon the reef.

The black flag flying above the schooner's deck told all what they might expect if taken, and the planter was determined to fight his craft to desperation.

Taking the most powerful glass on the lugger, Faustine turned it upon the schooner and took a long, steady look.

Irene was watching her closely, and saw her start, her face grow paler, and she stepped quickly to her side.

"What is it, dear?"

"He is on yonder craft."

"Romer?"

"Yes," was the hoarse reply.

Irene took the glass and leveled it at the schooner, saying, after a minute:

"I see a tall man, with beardless face, dressed in uniform."

"That is he."

"Take in the topsails," called out Leon.

The order was promptly obeyed, and soon after he called out:

"Lower away the foresail!"

This was also done, the lugger losing her rapid headway under her decreased sail.

The flying jib followed next, then the mainsail, and she moved slowly forward under jib alone.

This, too, as the lugger neared the cliff, was let go, and headway was almost stopped.

Then two heavy sweeps were gotten out, and the craft was turned, and stern-foremost went into the aperture in the cliff.

It stood all alone, surrounded by sunken reefs and jagged rocks, over which the waves broke viciously, and the only way of approach was by that the Arrow had come.

Warped in alongside of the cliff she was made fast, and her broadside was toward the channel, commanding it perfectly, while, hidden from the schooner, she could not be reached by her direct fire.

"This is the very place, Leon, and now we can stand at bay," said the planter, and he felt that there they could defend themselves even against a hundred men.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BOAT ATTACK.

"MASTER, I'll go upon the cliff, and watch the schooner, while you get all ready to fight her," said Leon, when the Arrow was made fast to the cliff, her length just fitting in the opening.

"Well, Leon, we'll get all in readiness, and you can report down to us."

"Yes, sir," and Leon sprang ashore and clambered up the steep side to the top.

In half an hour he came back, and he said:

"Master, the pilot on the schooner knows he cannot bring her in here."

"Yes."

"Where she is there is a fine anchorage, no matter how the wind is."

"Well."

"He's taking it awful cool, sir, and they are going to send all their boats, and in one they are putting a small gun."

"Ah! that looks bad, Leon!"

"Master, you have got plenty of cotton bags on board."

"Hundreds of them, Leon."

"And right there, sir, on the side of the cliff, is a cargo of sand, so suppose we fill the bags and put them along this side of the lugger."

"Leon, you were intended for a fighting man."

"It is the very thing."

"We can get the planks in the hold, sir, and put them three deep along the bulwarks, and then pile the bags two deep all along, and I don't believe that gun in the schooner's yawl will send a ball through that."

"All hands here to work," called out the planter, and the bags were quickly brought out from the hold, and while Faustine and Irene, with their maids, went ashore and filled them with sand, four of the crew were kept busy bringing them on board.

The planter and Claude, with the remainder of the crew, were getting up the planks from the hold, some that the crew had brought for a fancy cottage in the grounds of Waxside, and they were nailed four deep along the bulwarks, Leon superintending the work.

He also had a shelter made of planks, behind

which the guns could be loaded, while a platform was made upon which to run the little six-pounder belonging to the lugger, and fire it.

"Brick and me will take the gun, master," he said, and the planter knew that the faithful fellow was taking upon himself the most dangerous work, and told him to let some others of the crew man the gun.

"They might get excited, master, and I won't," was the reply.

The bags of sand were now placed alongside of the bulwark, from stem to stern, two deep, and packed close, and she heeled well over under the pressure, but this they did not mind.

The ammunition for the gun was then brought up and guarded by sand-bags, and that for the muskets it was decided to put in the cabin and have them loaded there.

The muskets, rifles and pistols had all been carefully loaded, and of the former there were two apiece for each man, with several rifles over.

Seeing Leon so perfectly cool his crew followed his example, and as for Faustine and Irene they were without a sign of fear and tried to impart their courage to the two negroes, Silvy and Lucy, but found it no easy task.

The planter was calm, stern, and knew fully what was before them, while Claude smoked a cigar, joked and was indifferent to danger.

The fact was with Claude Avon, he feared a creditor more than he did death, and yet, constantly making good resolves never to gamble, he as constantly broke them; but the letter he had received gave him a fright that he would not soon forget.

So well had all worked that within an hour all was in readiness for the attack, Faustine in her thoughtfulness having water, linen bandages and brandy ready, which caused Claude to remark when he saw the brandy:

"Make me a julep, please, Faustine, as I might get wounded."

"You would have to be wounded before I would ever give you a drop of liquor, Claude," was the reply, and the young man subsided with the remark:

"I'm wounded now by that shot, Faustine."

Finding that the temptation was too great to be near the brandy and not indulge in a glass, Claude said he would go aloft and see what the pirates were about.

So he sprang out on the cliff, and soon after called down:

"They are just leaving the schooner."

"How many?"

"Five boats."

"Can you count the men?"

"I will try, sir."

In a short while he called out:

"The gig leads, and it has four oarsmen and seven other men in it, one of whom I think is the captain."

"Eleven!" said the planter.

"The yawl is on the gig's starboard quarter, and she carries the gun in her bow, and it looks like a six-pounder."

"How many men?"

"Ten oarsmen, and I think as many more men are in her."

"Eleven and twenty are thirty-one," cried Mr. Fairfax.

"The long-boat is off the gig's port quarter and carries twelve oarsmen and ten others."

"Twenty-two and thirty-one make fifty-three."

"Any more?"

"Yes, sir; two boats follow in the wake of the others with about six men in each."

"Sixty-five in all, and those rear boats are to take off the wounded; so that pirate captain has a wise head."

"How far are they off, Claude?" asked Faustine.

"About half a mile."

"Better come down now, Master Claude, for we'll see 'em now soon as they round the next bend in the channel," said Leon.

Claude leisurely descended the hill, and all then took their positions, the young planter saying:

"Leon, you take a musket, for I'll man this cannon, with Brick."

"I better help you, sir."

"No, Leon, for I have too high a regard for you to wish you killed, and besides, my dear fellow, if you got your brave head knocked off, who would ever get the lugger out of this hole?"

"That's so, Marster Claude; I'll go, sir," and the faithful fellow yielded his place.

A moment more and half a dozen voices cried out:

"There they are!"

The five boats now swept into sight, ceased rowing as the lugger was seen, and then the yawl moved up alongside of the gig, and a moment after a flash came from her bows.

The roar of the boat howitzer followed, and a shower of dirt fell upon the lugger's deck as the ball hit the cliff.

"That is for us to surrender," said Mr. Fairfax, calmly.

"The captain is in the gig, sir, for it carries the black flag," Leon remarked.

"Yes," and the planter called out:

"Claude!"

"Ay, ay, commodore," came the cheery reply.

"The gig carries the black flag and so the pirate leader is in it."

"I'll endeavor to hand him my card, before the ball is over," answered Claude.

"Oh, Claude, don't joke at such a moment," called out Irene from the companionway.

"It may be the last moment I have to joke, sis," was the light response.

A moment more and another shot came from the yawl, and this buried itself in the cliff, just above the lugger's deck, sending down upon the vessel showers of dirt.

"Hold on, Sir Pirate! Kill us before you bury us!" shouted Claude, and in spite of the perilous situation all laughed at the remark.

"Hold hard, now, for I'm going to fire," continued Claude, and the lugger quivered under the discharge of the little gun.

As the smoke drifted from their eyes, all gave a cheer, for the gig's crew were seen struggling in the water.

"A dead shot that, Claude," cried the planter.

"I didn't get the captain, though, as they are pulling him into the yawl," was the reply.

Whether the shot enraged the pirate chief or not, the gun in the yawl now opened fiercely, and her shot struck the bulwark of the lugger, crashed through, and tore into one of the bags of sand, where its force was spent.

A yell of joy came from the negro crew, while Mr. Fairfax, who was just in the range of the iron ball, said:

"Bravo, Leon, you saved me by your sand breastwork."

Claude now returned the fire of the yawl, and the guns answered each other promptly, the pirate's shots being well aimed, and each time striking the lugger on her rigging, yet doing no injury to her crew.

It was seen that Claude's fire had also done some damage to the boats, and they were now rowing forward to the attack with all their speed.

As they drew nearer the men in the boats not at the oars opened with their muskets, and the patter of the bullets became incessant.

"They are near enough now, commodore," cried Claude, who could see better from his position forward at the gun than the others.

"Fire!" cried the planter, and eleven muskets were discharged.

"Again, boys!" and the empty guns were thrown aside and the other loaded ones seized and discharged.

"Keep it up, boys, for we are hurting them badly!" cried Claude, at the same time discharging his piece of artillery.

Faustine and Irene loaded rapidly and coolly, and the two negroes, after the first shots showed them they were not killed, also gained courage and emulated the example of their young mistresses.

As to the pirates, they came on hard, their gun still firing from the yawl, their muskets pouring in a hot fire; but the gig had been left a wreck in the water, and another boat had been left behind, out of the fight, with no one in it, as it was in a sinking condition.

"Give it to them!" shouted the planter, in thunder tones.

"Don't throw your fire away, boys; look where you aim, and let them have it."

"If they gain our decks we are gone!" cried Claude, and, regardless of his own safety, he deliberately aimed at the yawl, saying to Brick:

"If I can hit her squarely, it will end the attack."

His shot knocked an oar from the hand of one of the men, and as it checked the yawl's speed, a boat in its wake ran into it, and for a moment there was a temporary halt and confusion.

But a voice, distinctly heard by those on the lugger, shouted out:

"On, on, you war dogs, for the game is ours!"

"Oh, Irene! that is his voice!" and Faustine's face was the very picture of despair.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE FATAL SHOT.

"Come, Faustine, now is the time you must not yield to fear, for we have brave defenders," said Irene, cheerfully, as she feared her friend's courage might fail her, knowing what a fiend Redfield Romer was.

"Well said, you noble girl; I will not be the one to falter," and Faustine resumed her work with steady hands, for the guns were needed on deck as rapidly as they were loaded by those in the cabin.

The pirates were now not a cable's length away, and still coming on.

But Duncan Fairfax, who coolly watched the situation, and fired as the guns were banded to him, saw that the fire of his crew had been most damaging.

Three of the five boats were still coming on, but here and there in them an oar was missing, where a wounded man had dropped it.

Then, too, there was dead weight in those

boats, where men were wounded, for the order from the pirate was heard:

"Throw the dead overboard."

On his side a form with a black facelap dead, and several slight wounds had been received; but the negro crew were roused now to resentment, and they needed no urging to fight to the last.

Hearing the order of the chief, and the words: "The game is ours!" Claude Avon again calmly sighted his gun and fired.

Yells, curses and shouts mingled with the crashing of the timbers, and the yawl was out of the fight.

The long-boat was quickly alongside, and the chief, with his men, sprung into it on one side, while the other boat coming up took others of the men.

"The yawl goes down, and her old blunderbuss with her!" shouted Claude.

"Give way, you devils! for our game is won!" came in the trumpet-like voice of Redfield, who stood up in the bows of the long-boat.

But the crew shrunk from under the fire of the muskets on board the lugger, and seemed terrified by the wild screams of the now frantic negroes, and they began to back water, dreading also another shot from the gun that had done so much damage.

"Dare you retreat against my orders?" yelled Redfield, waving his sword viciously over the heads of the oarsmen.

But the men did dare, and the long-boat and the cutter were on the retreat, surely.

Seizing a musket, Redfield threw it to his shoulder and fired with the grim remark:

"I know you as her lover, young sir, and she shall never be your wife!"

A wild cry from Brick answered the shot, and all looked toward him, while Faustine sprung out of the cabin.

"It is nothing, for he is not hurt, are you, Brick?" cried Claude.

"No, sah, I'm all right," promptly responded Brick, and Claude Avon again sighted his gun.

But the shot missed, and as the boats were now retreating rapidly they got out of range of the muskets, and Mr. Fairfax ordered:

"Cease firing."

"That does not mean us, Brick."

"Give me another charge!" said Claude.

"Lor', Massa Claude, you done bleedin' now, sah, terrible."

"Yes, I got it bad, Brick."

"Ask Mr. Fairfax to come here, please, but don't say why."

"No, sah."

"My poor Claude, you are indeed hurt, and I fear badly so; but come, let us see what we can do for you," said the planter.

"But my sister and Faustine?"

"They must know it; ah, here they come."

One glance at the young man, with white face, and supported by the planter and Brick, and both Faustine and Irene sprung to his side.

"It's nothing sis; merely a flesh-wound, Faustine," the brave fellow said, with a smile.

But his haggard, livid face belied his words, and he was borne into the cabin and placed on a lounge, when the planter, who had a slight knowledge of surgery, examined the wound and probed for the bullet.

"You can't find it, sir?"

"No, Claude."

"I knew it."

"You'll give me a julep now, won't you, Faustine?" and he smiled.

"Oh, Claude!" and her eyes filled with tears.

"I don't care for it, Faustine, and in fact was joking before, for I gave up drink when we were in the city."

The planter dressed the wound as best he could, and then went on deck, as Leon called him.

"What is it, Leon?"

"We have a prisoner, sir."

"Indeed? Where is he?"

"Brick has him there, master."

"He was knocked overboard, and he swam to the lugger, as the boats would not wait for him, sir."

"I'll talk with him; but, Leon, Master Claude, I fear, will die."

"It's mighty sad, master, for Joe is gone, and three of the boys have wounds for you to look at soon as you can, sir."

"The prisoner can wait, for I'll care for them now," and the planter went to where the wounded negroes were.

He had begun to examine the injuries they had received when Leon came back and said:

"The prisoner says he's a surgeon, sir, and will do all he can for us."

"I'll see him," and the planter walked forward and confronted the man, who, dripping wet, sat on the deck, while Brick stood by him with a musket.

He was a young man, with a frank, intelligent face, and was dressed in a uniform, and not the ordinary seaman's attire.

He arose and saluted the planter, and said:

"I am your prisoner, sir."

"A pirate?" sternly said the planter.

"So it would seem, sir; but I am not, although caught in bad company."

"You sent me word that you were a surgeon?"

"I am, sir, and was on my way South to settle and practice medicine, when our craft was captured by the pirate Red Roamer, and robbed."

"Finding I was a doctor he coolly took me on board of his vessel, rigged me up in this uniform and called me his surgeon, telling me that I could make more money as a pirate, and that he would give me plenty of patients to practice on."

"He ordered me with him in the boat attack, and when the retreat began I slipped overboard in the confusion and swam to your vessel."

"My name is Rupert Breslin, and you have my history, whether you will believe it or not; but if you have any one severely wounded let me look to their comfort before you hang me as a pirate."

There was that in the face of the young man that impressed the planter with the truth of his words, and he said:

"Egad! but I'm half inclined to believe you."

"At any rate, I have work for you, so Leon, get a dry suit of clothes for the gentleman and then bring him into the cabin."

"You must believe me, sir, or you would never speak of a pirate as a gentleman."

And the young man laughed at his own conceit as he followed Leon forward, while the planter returned to his wounded slaves.

One had a scalp-wound on the side of his head, and this was soon dressed, while a second and third had flesh-wounds in the shoulder and arm, respectively.

There were others slightly wounded, but they did not mention them then, when their comrades were more seriously hurt.

Ere he finished dressing the first wounded negro the young surgeon joined him and said:

"I am ready, sir."

"Then come with me to the cabin, for I fear Mr. Avon is beyond recovery, and these brave boys will let you see him first."

"Yes, massa."

"Sartinly, massa."

"Oh, yes, sah," were the quick replies of the brave fellows.

Entering the cabin the planter found Irene seated by her brother and Faustine standing near.

"Claude, I have a visitor for you, and he is a surgeon, who sprung out of the pirate boats and swam to us, having been impressed by the Red Roamer to serve him."

"Doctor Breslin, this is the young gentleman, Mr. Claude Avon, and but for him the pirates would have taken the lugger."

"It was a magnificent defense you made, sir, and, since I see your force, a wonderful one."

"You killed and wounded more of your assailants than you have people on your vessel."

He spoke like a gentleman, bowed low to the young ladies, and stepping to the sofa as Irene gave way for him, took Claude's hand.

That he understood his business a glance was sufficient to show; but though Irene and Faustine watched his face anxiously, not a sign of what he thought could they read there.

"The bullet entered here, I see, and I will try if I cannot find it, for I see a box of instruments here," he said.

"I have them for use on my plantation, sir, being sometimes called upon when we cannot get a doctor," the planter explained.

"And a medicine-chest, too, I am glad to see."

"Fortunately I purchased both the chest and case of instruments in the city a few days ago."

With skill that was marked the young man made a thorough examination, dressed the wound carefully, and gave Claude a soothing draught of medicine.

"Tell me the truth, sir; will I recover?" asked Claude, in a firm voice.

"You have a severe wound, sir, but—"

"I want the truth, for I feel that you know."

The surgeon glanced toward Irene and Faustine and hesitated.

"Speak, sir, for we must know the worst," Irene said, with a firmness equaling her brother's question.

"I will tell you the truth, sir; you cannot live!"

CHAPTER XXXV. THE LAST FAREWELL.

WHEN the surgeon uttered the words that made known to Claude Avon and the others present his doom, a sob broke from Irene, and then the words:

"My poor, poor brother!"

"Sister, we all have to die, and mine has just come sooner than we expected, so don't break down, dear, but cheer me up," said the brave young fellow.

Going to his side Irene sunk down upon the floor and grasping his hand kissed it.

"I will see to the poor fellows on deck," said the young surgeon, and he turned quickly, but not until Faustine had seen tears in his eyes.

Instantly she stepped forward and said, as

she choked back her own emotion, and extended her hand:

"Do what you can for the poor men, and if you need a woman's hand to aid you, call me."

"I thank you, lady," and the young man seized the case of surgical instruments and medicine-chest and hastened on deck.

"Do you believe his story, Faustine?" asked Claude, softly.

"I do," was the firm reply, "for that man has a heart, and is no pirate."

"I say so too, Faustine."

"Come, sit here by me, for I have something to say to you."

"Will you yield your place, sister?"

Irene arose and glided toward the companionway, where she crouched on the steps and buried her face in her hands.

"Faustine!"

"Yes, Claude," and she took the hand lying upon his breast.

"Do you remember when we were children together, I a boy of twelve and you and Irene girls of eight?"

"Yes," she said, softly.

"I told you then that you were my little sweetheart, and, Faustine, I never have ceased to so feel toward you."

"I have loved you, and it was your influence that kept the Satan in my nature down."

"I went to school over in the city, and I got astray somehow, and became wild and dissipated."

"Sometimes when I thought of you I would make new resolves and keep them, until I remembered that it was said you were engaged to a young man in the North."

"Then I grew reckless, and though I knew it was weak in me to do so, I became worse and worse."

"I gambled, and I lost."

"Losing heavily I gambled more, went through with my income, and I sinned to get money."

"See, I confess my crimes to you."

"Then you came back, and Irene told me that you were not engaged to any one."

"At once I swore to reform; but I was in terrible trouble financially, and I had to find some way out of it, so went with you to the city."

"Somehow my papers of indebtedness got into the hands of a good man, my father's friend, he said, and he saved me from trouble."

"Who he is I do not know, but I wish you would seek him out with Irene and let my income go toward paying him back, after which it is sister's, you know."

"I will do all you wish, Claude."

"And, Faustine, if I had lived I was going to show you that my life had changed, and ask you to be my wife."

"But that hope has gone by now, and I can only feel joy in the thought that I did all in my power to defend you."

Faustine's face was the picture of grief, but she controlled her emotion now, and called Irene to her.

She saw that the face was changing, that death was stamping its seal upon it, and ere long the end must come.

After a while the wounded man started and said hastily:

"Bid the boys come quickly, for I wish to say good-by to all."

"Oh, brother!" moaned Irene, while Faustine called to her father and the surgeon, telling the former of Claude's request.

"They shall come," he said, deeply moved, while the young surgeon entered the cabin, laid his hand gently on the pulse, and then administered a glass of brandy.

"My last drink, Faustine," he said, with a smile, adding in his reckless, plucky way:

"I'll never break my temperance pledge again."

A few words to tell his mother, and the farewells began.

It was a grand sight, one to touch a stony heart, to see that young man slipping away from life.

He had lived his short life badly, for no purpose, but he was dying without regret and with a brave front.

One by one the negroes came and grasped his hand, their great, strong frames shaking with emotion as he said a parting word to each, while Leon, the brave, splendid fellow who laughed at death when it threatened him, turned at the companionway and, as he staggered up the steps, cried in a voice that was most pitiful:

"No! no! no! master, I cannot come to say good-by, sir!"

Out upon the deck he went, while within that cabin the sounds of grief welled up from all, the negroes rocking their bodies to and fro, and chanting one of those weird melodies of their race.

White-faced, the man who had come from a pirate craft stood there, and if he was the possessor of a guilty soul, he saw then what it was to wring anguish from the hearts of others.

Stern, silent, with bowed head, stood Duncan Fairfax, while, crouching on the floor by the settee, each grasping a hand of Claude Avon, were his sister and Faustine.

"I am going soon; let the boys sing for me," came in a whisper.

Then, in response to his last request, the dying man heard the voices of the negroes as they chanted a touching melody that seemed just suited to waft a soul from its casket of clay into eternity.

As the last notes died away the pirate surgeon stepped forward, and placing his hand softly upon the upturned face, said:

"He is dead!"

"God be merciful unto him," came as a low-voiced prayer from Faustine, and upon the sad scene the curtain falls, kind reader, for whatever his sins had been, Claude Avon had gone to join the great majority, and death makes all things even.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AN UNEXPECTED FOE.

FOR some moments after the death of Claude Avon no word was spoken, and then, obeying a motion from the planter, two negroes stepped forward and bore the body upon deck, where it was wrapped in a sail and placed out of sight.

The pirate surgeon had carefully attended to the negro wounded, and was aiding Leon to put the vessel to rights, when the planter joined him.

"You must make all ready, sir, for an attack to-night, for Captain Redfield is not a man to give up a prize, and you may expect him to creep upon you under cover of the darkness," said the surgeon.

"I thank you, sir, and shall take your advice."

"Master, who was the pilot, sir, with the boats?" asked Leon, addressing the stranger.

"An old man whose name I did not hear."

"Was he killed, master?"

"No, nor wounded."

"Then they can come again by night, master."

"We must prepare for them, Leon, as best we can," said the planter, to whom the pilot had addressed the last remark.

"You have lost a valuable man, sir, and one of your crew, but permit me to take the place of one at least, if you are willing to trust me."

"I certainly am, sir, and you may as well feel at once that not one of us have the slightest doubt of you."

"I thank you, sir, and I appreciate your kindness."

"Can you tell me anything of this pirate, sir?"

They were standing near the companionway, and Faustine, pacing to and fro in the cabin, heard the question addressed to the surgeon.

"I can tell you, sir, all that I know," was the reply.

Faustine then came up the companionway and stood near, looking out over the sea, as though in deep thought; but her ears were turned so as to catch every word.

"You said that his name was the Red Roamer?"

"Yes, sir; that is a name he has just assumed, I believe."

"It seems that he was a naval officer, but took to piracy from some cause, and he broke away from the band of buccaneers to which he had allied himself and began to rove the seas upon his own account."

"He had just begun an active life of piracy, I believe, and the vessel I was on was one of his first prizes."

"Unfortunately for me he saw me dressing the wound of a seaman, after the prize was captured, and so ordered me with him."

"He allows no officer of the rank of lieutenant on his vessel, rules his men with an iron hand, but divides liberally with them all booty."

"He seemed friendly toward me, and said he would make my fortune in the year."

"Being in the lion's den I did not care to anger him, so chimed in with his humor, made myself useful, and he took me into his cabin with him, gave me a uniform to wear, presented me with this diamond ring and watch, and in fact treated me most kindly."

"His intention, he said, was to lie in wait for your vessel, for he told me that a lady on board of it he was to make his wife, and he would risk life a thousand times to capture her."

"Had he not run away from the Balize by the coming of a large armed schooner, he would have caught your vessel sooner."

"The pilot told him, when you ran in here, that you could defend your vessel against a large force, so he brought three-fourths of his crew to the attack, and he lost fully half a dozen killed and twice as many wounded, if not more."

"That is all I can tell you of Captain Redfield, sir."

"Redfield did you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"Faustine!"

"Yes, father."

And the maiden did not turn her face as she spoke.

"Was not that the name of your Uncle Lennox's adopted son?"

"Yes, sir."

"Redfield what?"

"Romer, sir."

"I wonder if it can be he?"

Faustine said nothing.

"And you know he had fled from justice, my child?"

"Yes."

"And, doctor, you say this pirate now calls himself the Red Roamer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hear that, Faustine; the simple change of taking field off of Red and putting an *a* in Romer."

"I believe he is the man, and I can now account for his diabolical attempt to kidnap you."

"From what have you not been saved, my child!"

Faustine said nothing.

Her heart was full to bursting.

She had tried to shield the man whom she had once loved, but it had come out in the end, and in such a strange way.

She saw that her father suspected her, for knowing Redfield Romer as she had in the past, she could not but have recognized him as her captor.

So she decided to make a clean breast of it and said frankly:

"Father, the Red Roamer, as this gentleman calls the pirate, is none other than Redfield Romer, the adopted son of Uncle Lennox."

"I recognized him as the captain of the schooner that came into New York Bay, and as my captor afterward; but, not to give those pain who had known and loved him, I kept it secret."

"Now there is no need to hide it."

"My poor child, you have indeed had a bitter secret to bear in your little heart."

"But cheer up, for Redfield Romer's career will not last long, as the Bride of the Wind will soon end it in my opinion; but what are you looking at, Leon?"

"Master, I don't like the looks of the sky, sir."

"What is the matter with it?"

"Well, sir, it looks as if we was goin' to have some very ugly weather."

"We should be safe here."

"No, master, we are safe here with the light wind now blowing, and from this quarter; but if it came on to blow even half a gale, the lugger wouldn't last ten minutes, sir, for she'd be knocked to pieces."

All glanced at the skies and saw that they were assuming an ugly look, and an observation of their position proved conclusively that they were in a death-trap should the wind cause the sea to rise.

What was to be done?

That was the question, and the planter said:

"How about the schooner, Leon?"

"She can stay there, master, in a tornado, for she's sheltered by the low islands on all sides."

"Can we not run out by her in the dark?"

"Not without going within a length of her, sir, I might say."

"Then we are in a bad fix?"

"Yes, sir."

"We were this afternoon, and got out of it."

"Yes, sir, but I'm sure I don't see how we can do it now," and Leon seemed greatly worried.

"Will you permit me to make a suggestion, sir?" asked the surgeon.

"Certainly, sir."

"Life is dearer than riches, I take it."

"By all means."

"This man is your pilot?"

"Yes."

"And the old pilot said on the schooner, that he never saw a craft better handled in these waters than was your lugger."

"Leon knows these waters perfectly," said the planter, and the bronzed-faced pilot was delighted at the praise bestowed upon him.

"Now, with such a pilot, Mr. Fairfax, I think we can escape from this peril."

"Kindly explain your plan, for Leon says there is but one way a boat can get here."

"My plan, sir, is to strip the lugger of all that you care to take from her, and put it on the cliff, making a fort of the sand and boards and tents for the ladies out of canvas."

"The little cannon can be dragged up to the fort, and your two boats also, up out of reach of the waves."

"Then if the schooner goes to pieces, the pirates will think you all lost, for the old pilot, I see, was mistaken, as he said no landing could be made on this cliff."

"If they should not depart, you will be higher up than on the lugger's deck, better protected, and having your stores, can stand a siege until relief comes."

"If the pirate schooner goes away, then your pilot, Leon, can take all in the two boats safely to some point near where you will be safe."

"Such is my plan, sir."

"And a good one it is, too, don't you think so, Faustine?"

"I do, indeed, sir, and I thank Doctor—" she hesitated and the surgeon bowed and said:

"My name is Rupert Breslin, Miss Fairfax, and I may add, the Pirate Surgeon."

"Will you select the place for the fort, sir?" asked the planter.

"Let us first coffin the dead and bury them in the sand, for they can be readily removed if it is desired."

This was quickly done, rude boxes being made, and then, as the storm was seen to be rapidly rising they set to work to get the things from the lugger ashore as quickly as they could.

The cannon was first drawn up with ropes, the boats were dragged out of reach of the waves, and then while some removed the stores and furniture from the lugger, others, under the direction of the surgeon, began to build the fort, and in a place that commanded the approach.

The cannon was given the place of honor, the guns were stacked near and a framework was made, over which tarpaulins were drawn so as to make strong, rain-proof quarters.

Then, in a gulch of the cliff, a tent of canvas was erected for the young ladies and their maids, and a third shelter for the stores.

Hiding her deep grief, Irene worked hard with the others, and within several hours' time the little party were well fixed against the storm, the attack, and starvation, if they were forced to remain there any time.

From a point of lookout on the cliff the schooner was visible, riding at two anchors, her topmast housed, and all stripped to meet the gale.

The clouds were of inky hue, and rolled up in huge masses, while, though the sun had not yet set, it became as dark as night.

"This will be a tornado, master," said Leon, and all went the rounds of the canvas shelters, drove more pegs into the ground, and secured them to meet the fierce winds that soon must be upon them.

Fortunately there was a natural ravine in the cliff, and in this the shelters had been placed, the fort being at the entrance, and here they would be greatly protected.

To prevent the sand from blowing, the surgeon suggested that they get buckets of water and throw upon it, and half a dozen negroes at once went to work, and all the loose earth and sand about was saturated.

"Now we are ready to meet the storm," said the planter.

"And just in time, master," Leon remarked, for he knew well the movements of the tornadoes in that latitude.

The Gulf now seemed as placid as the heavens, and a moaning sound came from the waters, as the force of the tempest yet afar off caused the waves to begin to rise in choppy seas.

Though made fast, the lugger began to rock and tug at her cables, as if knowing her danger, and it was but a short while before the truth of Leon's words was verified, as to its being impossible for a vessel to live there in a heavy sea.

The schooner could hardly be seen through the darkness, but still rode at her double anchors, though the negroes were praying that they would part and wreck her.

Suddenly the elements were rent with fiery serpents, as they seemed, and the cliff trembled under the terrific crash of the thunder.

The sea seemed to rise high up, as though to sweep the islands from its pathway, and waves were hurled with terrific force upon them.

The winds came shrieking on, like a charge of a regiment of fiends, and but for the fact that the shelters were in the ravine they would have been torn away and carried off.

Then the wisdom of wetting the sands about them was seen, as they otherwise would have been blinded by the shower blown into their faces, and half-buried beneath the weight.

The lugger was tossed about like a chip, until she snapped her cables, and then, dragged away from the cliff, by the receding waves, she was driven out over the waters and hurled with fearful force upon a sunken reef.

The crash was terrible, and the party cowered on the cliff as they heard it.

"This is fearful," cried Irene.

"Appalling," hoarsely whispered Faustine.

"This tempest cannot last much longer, fierce as it is, and we are safe here," the surgeon said assuringly.

"Think of the Bride of the Wind, for she is certainly in it," Faustine said.

"And the pirate schooner? Will she stand in it?" the planter said.

"Yes, master, she'll ride it out where she is," confidently asserted Leon.

Suddenly the darkness lifted, and the pirate vessel was visible, plunging fearfully, but her anchors still holding firm.

Then there came a cry from Faustine:

"See there!"

All eyes followed her pointing finger, and Leon cried excitedly:

"It is the Bride of the Wind, master, and she is coming in here to her destruction!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CRUISER AND THE PIRATE.

THE words of Leon caused a thrill of horror to go through the breast of each one that heard them, for, after the loss of their lugger, to see the splendid schooner-of-war dashing to her destruction was a fearful thought, while the pirate

schooner was riding at anchor in comparative safety.

Out upon the sea, driving down with the gale, as though coming directly into the rock-bound and reef-guarded waters, was visible a large schooner.

She had her mainsail reefed down to its highest line of reefing nettles, and forward was a storm staysail hardly larger than a small live-ton sloop would set.

Yet she was coming on like the wind, and her decks were drowned by the wash of the waves upon them.

Her peculiar rig, and the mounting of her guns, all pivots, from fo'castle to stern, showed that she was the Bride of the Wind.

She showed no flag, and in fact one would have been at once lashed to ribbons if set.

"She is a stiff boat, master, the stiffest I ever saw, to stand what she is now doing," said Leon, as the schooner came driving along, standing up well, and seeming to defy the waves.

"And she is heading into these fearful waters, not knowing what lies before her," said the planter.

"A superb vessel, and to meet such a fate is fearful," the Pirate Surgeon remarked.

Fascinated by the appalling spectacle, all gazed upon the schooner, taking positions where they could see her well, though they had to lie down to prevent being blown into the sea.

On, on, came the schooner, each moment drawing nearer the fatal reefs and ragged rocks that were in her path, and seemingly all unconscious.

All the glasses in the party were in use, the planter, surgeon, Faustine and Leon each having one to their eye, while Irene sat with bowed head, nursing her bitter grief and praying silently for the safety of the schooner.

"Master!"

"Yes, Leon."

"Did you see that, sir?"

"What was it?"

"See her crew work, sir, and there stands her captain by the helm, where two men have it."

"I see him, and I notice the crew sprung quickly to man the braces just now."

"They see her peril, perhaps, and are going about to work off-shore," Doctor Breslin suggested.

"No, master, she could not do that— See there!"

"Well?"

Leon was excited, and he evidently saw what the others did not.

"What is it, Leon?"

"She rounded the Spear Head Reef, master."

"Well, Leon, what of that?"

"She has a pilot on board!"

He fairly shrieked the words in his joy, and a wild cheer broke from all, Irene arousing herself and joining in at the delight that there was hope for the schooner.

"Can it be true, Leon?"

"Yes, master."

"How do you know?"

"You saw the men spring to the braces, and her course changed, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then she rounded Spear Head Reef, sir, and next went in between the Sentinels, sir, and no one but a pilot, and a good one, too, could take her there."

"See now, master, she is heading straight into the channel."

"But why is she cruising in among these islands?"

"She sees the schooner!"

Again a cheer broke from the black crew.

All were greatly excited whites and blacks, and all eyes were now upon the Bride of the Wind, as she came rushing into the very midst of deadly dangers.

"You think she has sighted the pirate, Leon?" asked the surgeon.

"Yes, sir; and before the storm broke, though we did not see her, as we did not look out upon the ocean, being too busy; but she is making her way, master, right for the pirate craft."

"They can have no combat in this tempest and sea, Leon."

"Maybe not, master; but the Bride of the Wind has got a pilot that knows these waters, and she is coming in to be near the pirate when the storm blows over, sir."

"I believe you are right."

"Yes, sir; and the pirate sees her."

The glasses were now turned upon the pirate schooner, and all observed a great commotion on board.

Men were seen running forward, and soon the windlass went round with a rapid turn, while other seamen were unfurling the sails and evidently getting ready to run.

"She's going to run off, master," cried Leon.

"She certainly is."

All watched the pirate craft alternately with the Bride of the Wind, and they saw that the outlaw crew worked as though greatly alarmed.

Still the cruiser came bravely on, following the channels, avoiding every dangerous reef, and standing up well under the face of the tempest.

Like beavers the crew of the Bother worked,

and the anchors were up by the time a storm-sail and foresail and mainsail, reefed down, were set.

Around swung the Bother, heeling far over and burying her lee rail, as the wind caught her sail, reefed down though it was.

But she forged ahead quickly, wore around, and, with her booms thrown to starboard, went flying out of the harbor where she had been lying.

The moment that she wore around a movement of the cruiser's crew was noted, and, as the pirate darted away, there went forth a flash of flame from the Bride of the Wind, a deep report mingled with the thunder, and a shot was sent flying after the fugitive craft.

"Le Roy means hot work," said the planter.

"He does indeed, sir; but is not this sight appallingly grand?" said the surgeon.

"Never did I expect to see its equal, surgeon; but, Leon!"

"Yes, master."

"Which way is the pirate going now?"

"Master, it looks bad, sir."

"What looks bad?"

"She is heading for the Fisherman's Pass, sir."

"What is that?"

"See those two islands, sir, away yonder?"

"Yes."

"There's a cut through them, master, called the Fisherman's Pass, which only boats of light draught can go through."

"What is the water there?"

"At low tide, sir, four feet in several places."

"And at high tide?"

"I have known it, sir, to be eleven feet."

"That schooner draws all of twelve."

"Yes, sir."

"Then she can never pass through."

"Now, master, the old pilot on her has got a wise head, and he's cunning as a fox, sir."

"Still, he cannot make a craft drawing twelve feet sail in water only eleven feet deep."

"The bottom there, sir, is muddy, washed in from the lagoons on the main shore, and I never have known the tide as high as it is now, sir."

"You think the pirate can go through the pass then?"

"Master, do you see where yonder tree is, sir, on that island?"

"Yes."

"I never saw the water in five feet of it, master, and now you see it's all around it, for this storm has blown half the Gulf in here, though it won't last long."

"It seems to favor the pirate."

"It does, master, for he'll skiff through and get away, when he might not be able to do it in fifty years again, as the Bride of the Wind has him cornered."

All had listened to Leon's explanation of how the Bother might escape, and they had great confidence in his judgment, and so considered it a foregone conclusion that, after all the risk taken by Captain Le Roy he would lose his prize.

But the cruiser came gamely on, and whenever opportunity offered she fired upon the pirate.

Straight now for the Fisherman's Pass the outlaw craft headed, and every eye was upon it as she neared it.

As though divining her intention, in the high water, the Bride of the Sea wore around and poured a broadside after her.

It was seen that several of the shots took effect, but the next instant the pirate schooner shot into the Pass and was seen no more, the high trees hiding her from view; but the Bride of the Wind still held on as though to also attempt the daring feat, though she must draw fully six more feet than did the pirate.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A LIFE FOR A SERVICE.

I WILL now return to the time when the Bride of the Wind ran the outlaw craft Sea Nettle upon the reef.

The reader will recall that Redfield had made a cat's-paw of the Spaniard, Lola, to free himself from a bad scrape.

Lola had taken the bait, and when he swallowed it, found out exactly what his captain had done.

Losing his presence of mind, it will be remembered, under the fire of the cruiser, he had driven his vessel to destruction, hoping to escape in his boats.

But Captain Le Roy had kept up such a hot fire as to shatter the boats and thus prevent the escape of the frightened crew.

A good underofficer, Lola had proven himself a poor commander, and bitterly had his men cursed him for cowardice and want of ability and nerve in danger.

When he surrendered he was placed in irons with his men, and put into the schooner's hold, while the vessel sailed to the point on Lake Borgne, near the City of New Orleans, to land Leon and enable him to return to his master.

The pirates Captain Le Roy sent for one by one, to see what they would tell him, but expecting no mercy themselves they kept silent.

Lola's turn happened to come last, and when he was asked by Captain Le Roy if he would give away the secrets of the retreat of his comrades he promptly said:

"It is worth something, señor."

"What is your price?"

"Little to you, but much to me, señor."

"Name the amount you wish."

"It is not gold, but my life."

"Ah!"

"Yes, señor, if you will pledge yourself to give me my life and pardon, I will betray to you some important secrets of the Gulf Buccaneers."

"I'll make the pledge, and when I wish to hear what you have to say I will send for you."

"Better lose no time, señor."

"Why?"

"The bird may leave his nest."

"What bird do you refer to?"

"The pirate chief."

"You belong to Isola's band?"

"I did."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, señor, that Captain Isola is dead!"

"Ah! this is news."

"It is true."

"When did he die?"

"Several days before you captured me."

"Where?"

"At his retreat."

"Of fever?"

"No, señor, of steel."

"Killed?"

"Yes, sir."

"By one of his men?"

"No, señor, by an officer, one whom he treated well, made a lieutenant, and who stole his new vessel from him, and then going to the retreat forced Isola to fight him with swords, and ran him through."

"You know this?"

"I saw it."

"Isola was a wonderful swordsman."

"Granted, but the American was better."

"An American was the mutineer?"

"Yes, sir, Captain Redfield, once in the navy I have heard, and as fine a sailor as ever trod a deck."

"Is he chief of the pirate band now?"

"Yes, sir; he wanted Captain Isola's shoes, so put them on, took his schooner, and placed me in command of the other craft, formerly the one the chief had commanded."

"Were you an officer so high as that?"

"I was."

"You said your officers were all killed when I captured you."

"I lied, because I did not wish to be singled out for the yard-arm."

"I see; but did you know Isola well?"

"I did, señor."

"You know the crimes he was guilty of when in the Spanish Navy?"

"Yes, señor."

"Do you know his brother?"

"Yes, señor."

"Where is he now?"

"I could find him."

"You can?"

"Yes, señor."

"You are a miserable, wretched coward, fellow, but you can be useful to me, and I will use you, pay you well and give you your life, if you serve me faithfully."

"If not, I'll string you up to the yard-arm the first time I suspect you of treachery."

Fred Le Roy spoke sternly, his bright eyes seeming to look through the guilty wretch, who became white with fear and trembled violently.

"I'll serve you well, Señor Captain, for I love life, and gold too."

"Well, tell me where your retreat is?"

"Ah, señor, if I could only have made up my mind to have told you the night you captured me, for then you would have caught Captain Redfield like a rat in a hole."

"But we can try to do so now," and Lola told about the secret retreat, how to get there, and all that he could tell, of the pirates and their haunts.

"Do you know those waters well?"

"Perfectly."

"Can you run a vessel through them night or day?"

"Yes, señor."

"Come on deck, take the position as pilot on board this vessel and serve me well, or expect the alternative."

Lola was delighted at this chance to save his life, and he at once put the schooner on her course for the secret Lake Retreat on the island.

Explaining about its ingress and egress, Captain Le Roy decided to approach by night, and this he did, finding that the pirate pilot did thoroughly understand the waters.

Placing three boats at the inlet side of the retreat he anchored the schooner off the bayou entrance, and awaited until daylight.

Then he entered the bayou with the boats and, under the guidance of Lola pushed on into the lake.

All was still there, and all was deserted.

But upon the shore a number of buzzards sprung up from a feast, a human form, and

Lola said that it was the body of the dead chief.

Going to it, Le Roy gazed at it an instant, tore open the vest and shirt, and upon the breast was the drawing of a skull and cross-bones in a black flag, all done in india ink.

Calling to his men, he pointed out to them the strange design, and taking out an ink-horn and quill-pen, he wrote as follows:

"Found the body of Isola Casandra upon his island retreat.

"Body was being devoured by vultures, having been dead some days.

"Upon the breast was the sign of black flag, with skull and cross-bones done in india ink.

"Upon the little finger was ring with the Casandra crest.

"The ring accompanies this paper.

"From what I know and see before me, I here swear that this body to which I refer herewith, is that of Isola Casandra, late lieutenant in Spanish Navy."

This he signed, and then, under the head of "Witnesses," had five of the seamen with him sign the paper.

A postscript he then added as follows:

"I hereby swear that the body above referred to is that of Isola Casandra, as stated, and that I saw him run through the heart in a duel with one Captain Redfield, now chief of the Gulf Pirates.

"That I knew Isola Casandra well my name attests, and which I here subscribe.

"LOLANDO VASALA,

"Late Private Secretary to

"El Capitan-General of Cuba."

This document Captain Le Roy carefully put away, and, not finding the pirates in their lair, he ordered his boats back to his vessel and set sail.

"Now, pilot, we sail for New Orleans, and you are to take me to where I will find Pedro Casandra," said Captain Le Roy.

"You will protect me, señor, for he is a dangerous man?"

"Yes, you need have no fear," was the answer, and the schooner was put away for New Orleans.

But upon the arrival of the Bride of the Wind in the Crescent City port, it was found that Pedro Casandra lay badly wounded, and hardly expected to live, having been robbed and nearly murdered a short while before the coming of the schooner.

"He is safe, and another time we will give him a call," said Captain Le Roy, and once again the fleet craft went to sea bound on her mission of pirate-hunting in the Gulf of Mexico.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE CHASE IN THE TORNADO.

AFTER meeting the Arrow and warning the planter, Duncan Fairfax, to have a lookout for a pirate schooner, Captain Le Roy cruised about searching for the craft he so longed to meet.

Keeping along close to the coast for a few hours, he then headed out to sea, determined to overtake the lugger and convoy her home, for the more he thought of her defenseless condition and the precious charge she carried in Faustine and Irene, the more he felt anxious for her safety.

So he started to find the Arrow, and had given up all hope of doing so, when he spied a vessel inshore at anchor.

Lola, the pilot, was at once ordered to the helm, and Captain Le Roy asked:

"Do you know those waters in yonder?"

"I do, señor."

"You see yonder vessel?"

"Yes, señor."

"Can you go to her?"

"I can, sir; but you see this tornado coming down upon us?"

"I do; but this craft can ride it out, so, if you do not fear to trust yourself, run me in to engage yonder craft."

"You recognize the schooner, señor?"

"I do."

"It is Captain Redfield's."

"So I know."

"He is at anchor in a safe harbor, señor, but it is a desperate gambler to run to get there."

"Can you go there?"

"Yes, señor."

"Take the helm and do so then."

"Señor?"

"Well?"

"As the wind now is, it will be difficult to reach him, but this storm is sweeping down from a source that will aid us, for I can run in before it under storm-sails alone."

"And he may escape in the mean while?"

"No, sir; he can only come out this way, for you have him hemmed in, Señor Capitan."

"Are there no passes he can escape through?"

"There's a pass yonder by the islands, but it will not let his craft go through even at high tide."

"Why has he gone in there?"

"I do not know, señor, for it is a place to keep clear of, if possible."

"Well, run in when you deem best, and remember, there is a great responsibility upon you, so if you lose your head, you lose your life."

And the young captain turned away.

He saw that the Bother lay quietly at anchor, and yet those on board did not seem to see his vessel in the offing.

He observed that the topmasts were housed, and preparations made to ride out the storm there; but, not being able to see the lugger hidden away under the cliff, he could not understand why the pirate had sought such a dangerous locality.

"I shall run in and fight him," he said firmly, and seeing that the tempest was coming down upon them with terrific fury, he gave orders for all to be in readiness to meet it, while the pirates, so taken up with their defeat, and preparing for the tornado, did not observe the cruiser lying in the offing.

When the tornado struck the Bride of the Wind, the splendid vessel met it in magnificent style, and though her decks were swept by torrents of water, she rose on the top of the waves and rode like a swan upon the waters.

Three poor unfortunates had been swept into the sea, and yet to attempt to rescue them would have been sheer madness, so they were left to their fate.

"Now, sir, take the helm!" shouted Le Roy to Lola, who stood near.

The Spaniard at once obeyed.

"You know where I would go, so take the schooner there."

"This is a worse storm by far, señor, than I had expected," said Lola.

"Do you fear to risk going in, sir?"

"It is a terrible risk, señor."

"Do you fear to take it?"

The man seemed to fear the young captain more than the storm, and the perilous waters ahead of him, and said:

"No, señor, I will take the vessel in; but if Captain Redfield defeats you, I will hang."

"Fool! do you think yonder craft is a match for the Bride of the Wind?"

"She has a heavy armament, Señor Capitan, and as many men, though she is not so large."

"Were she twice my size I would fight her."

"Captain Redfield is a desperate foe, señor."

"I see that you fear the man, not the storm."

"Yes, señor."

"You are afraid he will hang you, if he catches you?"

"Yes, señor, because I lost his schooner."

"Well, I will hang you if you do not obey my bidding."

The man quivered with terror and whined:

"I will obey you, señor."

"Then head in to an anchorage near yonder schooner."

The pilot Lola at once obeyed, and it was when driving in before the tempest that she had been seen from the cliff.

It was not until some time after that she was sighted from on board the Bother, and a cry of alarm went up.

Captain Redfield was in no amiable mood, for he had been beaten back, from his attack upon the Arrow, with the loss of nine men killed and drowned and twice as many wounded, not to speak of his two boats destroyed.

He was forced to retreat by the will of his men, who saw sure death if they advanced.

Still he held the consolation that the lugger was in his power, for the old pilot had explained just what might be expected in those waters, and as soon as night came on he intended to make another attack.

But the storm coming up he knew would prevent this, and the pilot told him the lugger must go to pieces, and he felt anxious for the fate of the woman he so persistently and cruelly persecuted.

When he had his vessel made ready to meet the tornado, he spent his time in watching the cliff, and could see parties moving about upon it, but he could not discover what they were doing.

Then the tempest struck the schooner, and it seemed as though it would tear her from her anchorage, yet did not, and he breathed more freely.

The driving of the lugger out from its shelter near the cliff horrified him, and he was so sure that all were on board that he took the shrieking of the winds for the cries of those drowning on the vessel.

"She is dead! Great God, dead!" he groaned through his shut teeth.

Then he was aroused by the startling cry:

"Sail, ho!"

He had no reason to ask where, for he saw her, and more, he knew the craft.

"That infernal cruiser! and she is coming in here to fight me."

"Pilot!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Can we not get out of that fellow's way?"

The pilot made no reply, but watched the coming vessel, then gazed about him.

"Did you hear me, pilot?"

"We can try."

"Then do so."

"It is our only chance."

"Take it."

"It is only this tremendous amount of water driven in by the tempest that will let us do it."

"I don't care what it is, so you do it."

Then the anchors were hauled up, and as the

Bother began to move the Bride of the Wind opened fire upon her.

But she bounded away like a frightened deer, and the old pilot held on for the Fisherman's Pass, for he had seen that it was the only chance of escape, and the chance of a lifetime.

"That fellow follows us boldly, captain," said the pilot.

"Yes."

"He cannot follow us further than yonder islands."

"Why?"

"Not enough water for him."

"Ah!"

"How much did you say you had to your keel?"

"Ten and a half feet."

"There's generally some five feet in the cut, but with this tide there must be twelve, and it goes through like a torrent."

"That schooner must draw fourteen?"

"Every inch of it, sir, from the way she stands up in this hurricane," answered the pilot.

So on the Bother flew, receiving the fire of the cruiser, and yet unable to return it, as her decks were drowned with water.

In spite of the gale, the cruiser gained, and Redfield said, as he watched her:

"Pilot, we must have that very craft some day."

"She is the best I ever saw, sir."

"She is indeed, and she shall be mine."

After a run of a quarter of a mile more he asked:

"Now, where is your pass?"

"Yonder, sir, where you see the islands parting."

"I see it, and if we should not go through?"

"We will, sir."

"But if not?"

"We are the cruiser's prize, sir."

"Never, for I would burn this schooner first, or blow her up with ail on board."

The pilotsaw that he meant what he said, and so held on his way in silence.

The cut now opened before them, and the waters were seen surging through it with fearful force and velocity.

"It's lucky it's a straight channel, for I could never steer her there," said the pilot, and the Bother swept into the channel, just as the broadside of the Bride of the Wind came crashing upon her, killing a man and doing some slight damage to the rigging.

But the man who fell was the pilot, and with a cry of horror, Redfield sprang to the helm himself, and held the craft on her way.

The wildly-flowing torrent bore the schooner swiftly through the cut, and the crew gave a wild cheer as they found they were in open water beyond, while Redfield brought the craft round and ordered the anchors to be let go, as he said grimly:

"We can ride out the storm here, for we have nothing to fear from the cruiser, as I felt our keel touch twice, and she can never come through."

But as he uttered the words, a cry of alarm was heard, and the cruiser was seen coming through the channel.

The anchors had not been let go, so the schooner was held on her way and more sail set, for all realized that their fearless pursuer was in desperate earnest.

As the Bother went bounding away over the rough waters night came on, and Redfield said, savagely:

"Not yet has Satan deserted his pet."

CHAPTER XL.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

WHEN the party on the cliff saw the pirate schooner dash into the pass, followed by the broadside of the cruiser, they did not expect to see the latter hold on her course, as Leon had said that she could not go through.

But to the surprise of all, and to Leon more than any one else, the beautiful vessel never swerved from following in the wake of the pirate, and, upon reaching the mouth of the pass, went flying into it like the very wind.

When she too disappeared from sight, the expression on the face of Leon was a study.

"What do you think of that, Leon?" asked the planter.

"I don't understand it, master, unless there is more water in the pass than I think, or the cruiser draws no more than does the pirate."

"She has gone in, surely."

"Yes, sir, and will go through, for the shallowest water is in this end."

"Then she'll catch the outlaw?"

"Yes, master, I guess she will, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"It is getting dark, sir, and the pirate may dodge the cruiser."

"You are right; but we will hope for the best, Leon."

"Now to prepare for the night, and to-morrow we must get away in the boats."

"Yes, sir."

"You can run us home by taking the coast around?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, if the sea is not too rough we'll start in the morning."

"We can take what things we need, and send the Hillcrest sloop after the bodies and the stores we leave."

It was with sad hearts that those in the cliff camp retired that night, though they were glad indeed that they had beaten back the pirates.

Irene was devotedly attached to her brother, and it had been a source of great sorrow to her to see him going to the bad, as he had been before the return of Faustine.

But his death was so unlooked-for, and so sad, that it touched her inmost heart, and bitterly did she grieve over it and feel for her poor mother.

The Pirate Surgeon, as the crew could not but call the stranger, gave her a soothing medicine, and so she managed to sleep and thus forget her misfortune and grief.

With the morning all were up betimes and preparing for the start.

The tempest had died out with the coming on of night, and when the dawn broke the wind had died down to a gentle breeze and the sea was no longer rough.

The lugger's two boats were not injured in any way, and the smaller one was arranged especially for the two maidens and their maids, Faustine and Irene intending to be the sailors, for both of them could sail a boat as well as half the men, having done so from childhood.

At night the party would camp, if convenient, and if not the planter would go in their boat and be helmsman.

The boats were both stanch and fair sailors, and it was hoped that they would not be many days getting home.

The stores and casks of water needed were put in each boat, and the rest of the things were left to be sent for, after they reached Wave-side.

All being in readiness, Leon took the helm of the large boat and both set sail, Faustine following the leader close.

Through the dangerous island and reef-dotted waters they went, and then they headed on their course, intending to make the run as near land as possible.

It was toward sunset that, when a few miles from the coast, a vessel suddenly appeared sailing lazily along around a point of land.

Instantly all was excitement in the boats, when Leon called out:

"The Bride of the Wind, missy; don't be scared!"

Cheers were given and the boats headed so as to cross the bows of the schooner.

But those on board the vessel had already seen the boats and the course was changed to bring her nearer to them.

In an hour's time they were within hail, and then came from the schooner:

"Boats, ahoy!"

"What boats are those?"

"From the plantation lugger Arrow, wrecked yesterday among the islands, and homeward bound," answered the planter.

"Come alongside!" was the order, and it was obeyed, the two boats ranging alongside as the schooner lay to.

"Have you seen anything of a rakish schooner last night or to-day?" asked a young officer.

"Do you mean the pirate craft?"

"Yes, sir."

"We have not seen her since you chased her by our position on the cliff, when we were wrecked; but is Captain Le Roy on board?"

"Yes, sir, I am here."

"Who is it that calls my name?" and Captain Le Roy stepped to the side of the schooner, a cigar between his lips.

"Ah! ladies!" he said in a surprised way, for the boat, in which were the maidens, had an awning, which had they now drawn aside.

"How are you, Le Roy?"

"You find us in bad plight!" called out the planter.

"Ah, yes, it is you, sir, is it?"

"And you seem to have been in misfortune, so I would be glad to serve you if I could."

There was no genial recognition, no hearty regret at finding them thus, and all felt pained.

"Well, we are making for home as best we can, and will not trouble you, thank you," answered the planter coldly.

"May I assure you that my vessel is wholly at your service, sir, and I will be very glad to offer my cabin for the comfort of the ladies and land you where you may desire?"

"Thank you, Captain Le Roy, but this boat is far from uncomfortable, and we can reach home in safety, I am sure," said Faustine, hurt at the manner of the man.

"As you please, ladies; but these are treacherous waters, and I would advise you to keep near the shore."

"But are there not some stores, or something else I can offer you to make you all more comfortable?"

"No, thank you, we are all right," the planter replied.

"May I inquire what has placed you in this plight?"

"We met the pirate you warned us against."

"The pirate?"

"Yes, sir, the Red Roamer as he calls himself."

"I would give much to meet him."

"When and where was this?" eagerly asked Le Roy.

"He's got 'em again," muttered the planter, while aloud he said:

"Yesterday."

"Where?"

"Back among the islands."

"Tell me of it, please?"

"Well, sir, after you warned us to keep off shore—"

"I warned you?"

"Yes, Captain Le Roy."

"My dear sir, I have not seen you since our meeting in New Orleans, when you tried to convince me that I had known you well and been of incalculable service to you, while now, when I really can serve you, you refuse my assistance."

"For all that, you met us night before last, warned us of the pirate, and we parted company."

"The man is mad," all heard him mutter to his officers.

The planter was nettled, but controlled his temper, and continued:

"We sighted the pirate in chase and ran to a cliff island, where Leon here told us we could stand at bay."

"We did so, and when the pirate attacked us in his boats we beat them back, killing and wounding a number, though I regret exceedingly to say that Miss Avon's noble brother was killed, and one of my slaves, while several were wounded as you see."

"I am sorry to hear of your loss, sir, and sympathize with the young lady."

"It was the young gentleman who boarded my vessel in the calm the other day, looking for a lady's bracelet he said."

"Which I again thank you for restoring to me," Faustine said.

"My dear lady, I never saw your bracelet, so how could I restore it?"

A look of pity filled the eyes of the planter and the maidens, and the former said:

"Well, Captain Le Roy, we will not detain you longer."

"But about this pirate, sir?"

"Well, sir, we beat him off, though at fearful sacrifice, as I said, and he anchored off the cliff until the storm broke and you came and ran him off."

"I ran him off?" asked Le Roy, with a look of surprise.

"You should know what you did, sir."

"I think that I do, until I meet you, sir, and then I get so mixed I wonder if I am going insane, or you are."

"Poor fellow," said the planter.

"And you have not seen the pirate since?"

"No, sir; good-day."

"You will not accept of my hospitality, sir?"

"No, thank you."

"And there is nothing that I can do for you?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"Shove off, Leon!"

The boat swung off, the captain bowed, and a seaman of the schooner, at the order of his captain, swung over the side and pushed off Faustine's little craft, and away both sailed.

"Well, doctor, what do you think of that man?" asked the planter.

"He is the one you have told me of?"

"Yes, sir."

"He is mad, sir; a clear case of lunacy."

"I pity him, but it is very unpleasant to have him treat us so one day and be all kindness another."

"It is the nature of his disease, and he is not fit to be trusted with that fine vessel, and I wonder his inferior officers do not report him," was the remark of the Pirate Surgeon, as the boats sailed on their way, leaving the Bride of the Wind to continue on her course at the sweet will of her mad captain.

CHAPTER XLII.

CAPTURED.

As the night after their start promised to be fair, and the breeze was in their favor, the planter, after a consultation with Leon, and asking the wishes of his daughter and Irene, decided to push on for home, instead of running for the land and camping.

He offered to come into the boat and relieve Faustine at the tiller, but Irene said she would help her through the night, as she could not sleep, and if they needed assistance they would call for it.

So the boats were headed boldly out from the shore to make the run.

Leon was at the tiller of the large boat, the planter having steered during the day, and he ran alongside and gave Faustine a supper which the cook had prepared as best he could, having made a fire on a bag of sand cut open, and with wood brought along for the purpose.

It was really a tempting repast, and the cup of hot coffee refreshed them all greatly.

Toward midnight Leon sighted a sail.

He did not speak of it at first, as all in the boat were asleep, excepting himself, and glanc-

ing astern he saw that only the fair helmswoman was visible there.

Whether it was Faustine or Irene, he did not know.

His eyes were heavy from loss of rest, and so he luffed a little and let the small boat come nearer.

"Missy Faustine, is that you?" he asked in a low tone.

"No, Leon, Miss Faustine is worn out, and has gone to sleep."

"Missy Irene?"

"Yes, Leon."

"Will you look off astern and see if you can make out anything, for I got so much sand in my eyes I can hardly see, missy?"

Irene glanced astern and said quickly:

"It is a sail. Is she coming this way?"

"I'm afraid so, missy, for she grows bigger and brighter."

"How far is she off?"

"I should judge half a mile or so."

"Can we do nothing, Leon?"

"Well, missy, I guess we better wake 'em all up, lower sail, and maybe she won't see us, while if it is not the pirate, and we want to hail them we can do it."

"All right, Leon, shall I wake up my boat's crew?"

"Yes, missy."

"I am awake."

"I heard Leon hail you and what was said," Faustine remarked wearily, adding:

"Oh, will our sorrows never end?"

"See what you make of the sail, Faustine," said Irene, and rising to a sitting posture Faustine looked steadily astern through her glass.

"It is a schooner, Irene, and she is coming toward us."

"Do you think it can be the Bride of the Wind?" eagerly asked Irene.

"I fear it is the pirate," was the low response.

In the mean time Leon had aroused his master, and the others in the large boat, and then came the word:

"Lower away your sail, please, missy."

This was done in both boats, and they lay under bare poles upon the dark waters, hoping thus to remain undiscovered.

Nearer and nearer came the schooner to them, heading so as to pass within a cable's-length away.

"If the watch on that boat has not seen us, we will likely pass unnoticed," said the planter.

"No, they will see us," the doctor remarked.

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it, for I know the watch kept on that craft."

"Ah! you think it is the pirate?"

"I know it is the vessel of the Red Roamer," was the low reply.

"What is to be done?" and the planter glanced anxiously over toward the other boat.

"Accept our fate, sir, as it comes to us, and mine will be hanging," was the cool reply.

"Oh, no, he would not do that."

"He will do anything, that man will, Mr. Fairfax."

"Suppose we tie the doctor, master, and keep him as our prisoner, for then he might help us on board the schooner?"

"Leon, your head is a wise one; it will be the very thing to do," said the doctor.

"Yes, nothing could be better, so get your rope, Leon," the planter said, and the doctor was soon securely bound, while those in the other boat were notified that the doctor had swum ashore at the cliff and been captured.

"It is the pirate vessel," said Faustine.

"I fear so; but we hope she won't see us."

"Boats ahoy!" came the stern hail as the very echo of the planter's words.

"Ahoy, the schooner!"

"What are you, where bound, and where from?"

It was the voice of Redfield, and one in each boat recognized it, Faustine and the surgeon.

"We are a shipwrecked party, and are bound to the coast; where we live."

"Come alongside and let me have a look at you."

That was the death-knell, it seemed, and with sinking hearts they went alongside of the schooner, as she lay to.

"Come on board, all of you."

"There are ladies here, sir, in the smaller boat," said the planter.

"Ladies! ah! my vessel is to be honored then."

"By Heaven! but I know that form in the dark."

"Faustine Fairfax, fate has sent you to me."

The Outlawed Cadet sprang toward Faustine as he spoke, but she drew back and said:

"Inhuman wretch, Heaven has punished me bitterly for ever having regarded you with friendship."

"Be a man, as we are in your power, and treat this poor girl with compassion, for your men took her brother's life."

"Ha! it is Miss Avon, and her brother fell by my hand, for I allow no rivals in my path for your hand, my beautiful Faustine."

Duncan Fairfax would have felled the pirate with a blow at his words; but the surgeon, bound securely, stepped quickly before him and said in a whisper:

"Forbear! you are in his power."

Then he called out:

"Captain Redfield, your sighting these boats was fortunate for me, as my neck was beginning to feel uncomfortable."

"What! you my gallant surgeon?"

"I deemed you at the bottom of the sea."

"And they have you in bonds, too?"

"Yes, sir; I was knocked overboard from the yawl, and your boats went off and left me, not hearing my call in the confusion, and so I swam ashore and was captured."

"You are free now, and should serve me well, for I have saved you from the hangman."

And the outlaw cut the bonds of the surgeon, who congratulated himself upon the success of the ruse they had played upon the cunning buccaneer.

The things in the boat were then taken on board, and as the schooner had lost her yawl gig these were taken in their place.

Then the schooner sailed on her way, and Faustine was once more in the power of her pirate lover, and Irene became her comforter as they were ushered into the cabin, while the planter was ordered to remain on deck and the negro crew sent forward with the men.

"What is your intention regarding us, sir, may I ask, Redfield Romer, for I now know you as the one whom Colonel Lennox took into his family as a son, and who turned out a viper?" said the planter.

"My intention, sir, is to take your crew as my own, for I need men, send Miss Avon to her home, to hang you, and make your daughter my wife," was the cool, cruel response of the Outlawed Cadet.

CHAPTER XLII.

RUN DOWN.

THE cruel remark of Redfield to Duncan Fairfax had hardly been uttered, when the lookout at the mast-head sung out:

"Sail ho!"

The pirate quickly glanced over the waters, and saw the distant sails of a schooner, and then called out:

"They may not have sighted us, so strip the craft of all canvas."

This was done, and then all waited.

But the vessel came on swiftly, and her course was directly toward the pirate.

"She has sighted us! Up with the sails, and spread every rag," cried the outlaw.

The men knew their danger, and sprung to their work, for all now recognized that the stranger was none other than the Bride of the Wind.

The Bother was soon one mass of canvas, and driving along at a speed that would have won the greatest admiration, but for the fact that the vessel in her wake was sailing faster.

Redfield noted the chase closely.

He saw that the Bride of the Wind was gaining, and rapidly.

"That is a wonderful craft," he muttered.

"The Bother seems to crawl when yonder craft is in chase, and yet I know that she is flying."

"I wonder what force he has?" and he turned to the planter and said:

"Mr. Fairfax, do you know what the schooner yonder has in crew?"

"A hundred men, I think."

"I have sixty-three, and your men, so I will fight her."

"My armament is not so heavy, it is true; but I want that craft, and, as we fight with a noose about our necks, we are worth two to one, so we are about even."

"Will you remain on deck, sir, or go to the cabin out of danger?"

"I prefer to remain on deck to see you beaten," was the stern reply.

"You will never see it, sir."

"All hands to quarters!" shouted the pirate.

Then followed:

"Sailmen to strip the schooner for action."

This was done, and to the evident surprise of those on board the Bride of the Wind.

"Now, gunner, open on yonder craft and cut her rigging to pieces," said the pirate.

The gunner trained the gun and fired, and it was a close shot, though a miss.

Then came the reply, and the stern pivot-gun of the Bother was dismounted.

"Curses!" hissed Redfield, and he ordered:

"Give her a broadside—steady now—fire!"

The schooner reeled under the discharge of the battery, and curses loud and deep filled the air as Redfield saw that the shot had not taken effect.

At the same time a broadside came from the Bride of the Wind, and another gun was dismounted and several men laid low.

"Head for her, helmsman, and lay her aboard!"

Like the beautiful thing she was, the Bride of the Wind came on.

Her sails were being taken in to put her in good fighting trim, and her men stood at their guns.

She was heading to meet the pirate, understanding his intention to board.

As they drew nearer, the Bother luffed and delivered another broadside from her crippled

battery, and then came the order for the musketeers to fire.

If the cruiser was hurt by the broadside she did not show it, but, as they came within pistol range the voice of Fred Le Roy was heard:

"Luff and give her a broadside loaded with grape!"

The guns of the Bride of the Wind flashed together, and the effect was fearful.

"Do you surrender?" came in Le Roy's clear tones, as he stood unmoved upon his quarter-deck.

"Never!"

"Lay her aboard, helmsman!"

"Boarders, follow me!"

As Le Roy uttered the words the two schooners came together, and the tall form of the cruiser's commander leaped upon the deck of the pirate, followed by his men.

"Now, Sir Pirate, yield!" and Captain Le Roy confronted Redfield.

An instant the two stood thus, and then Redfield fell forward upon his face stone dead, for he had received a bullet through his body.

Cries of quarter now arose upon all sides, and the vessel was won.

"You here, my dear Mr. Fairfax," and Fred Le Roy turned to the planter, who had calmly faced the whole battle, and remained unharmed.

"Yes, Captain Le Roy, and once more we are your debtor, for Faustine and Irene are in the cabin, as you doubtless know."

What the young captain would have said in reply was broken off with the loud cry:

"Sail, ho!"

It was just dawn, and there, not a mile distant was visible a large schooner.

All eyes were turned upon the craft, and Leon cried:

"Oh, master! it is the ghost of the Bride of the Wind!"

"The sea is haunted!"

Cruiser men and pirates alike now gazed upon the coming vessel, and all work ceased as she came flying down toward the two vessels.

Her sails looked like cloud-banks of snow, and her men were at their guns, which were run out for service.

"What does it mean?" gasped the planter, and he called to Faustine and Irene to come on deck.

"Remove those dead, and quickly!" ordered the cruiser's commander, and the body of Redfield was taken forward before the maidens reached the deck.

"Again we meet, Captain Le Roy, and you have proven yourself our friend," said Faustine with feeling, and she grasped the hand of the captain, while she glanced nervously about her.

Her father understood her look and said:

"Faustine, Romer is dead, and you are free from further persecution."

She bowed her head without reply, and the planter continued:

"But see, yonder comes the double of the Bride of the Wind!"

The maidens looked with surprise upon the coming vessel, watched her as she rounded to, and heard the hail:

"Schooner, ahoy!"

"Ahoy, the Bride of the Wind!" answered Le Roy.

"Is that the Red Roamer pirate you have captured there?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"May I ask your nationality?" and all saw that the flag at the peak of the schooner was not the Stars and Stripes, but a gold anchor surrounded by silver stars in a blue field.

"This vessel is a private cruiser, sir, under the protection of Spain."

"Will you not come on board, sir?"

"Thank you, yes."

"What does it mean?" muttered the planter.

"It means, Mr. Fairfax, that I copied that United States cruiser as a model for my craft, and thus the resemblance between the two vessels."

"When he comes on board I will explain another strange resemblance, the cause of which has lately been made known to me."

Going to the gangway the captain greeted his visitor, while the guns of the cruiser, at a signal from their commander, flashed forth a salute.

The visitor started back at the sight of the one who greeted him and said earnestly:

"Great God! it seems as though I were looking in the glass at myself."

"We are strangely alike, and when I tell you that we are twin brothers you and our friends here will not be surprised."

"Let me say that I learned my story long ago, how I was picked up at sea in an open boat with my dead mother."

"The vessel that found me was Spanish, and a wealthy Cuban planter on board at once adopted me, for he had no children."

"I was reared under my own name, that of Frederic Le Roy, however, and I was sent to the United States to school."

"Loving the sea, I became a sailor, and cruised for pleasure about the Gulf and adjacent waters."

"Some years ago a party of Cuban and Span-

ish merchants, fretting under the acts of piracy committed against their vessels, decided to build and equip a cruiser.

"I was selected as commander, and went to the United States to get a vessel."

"I saw yours building, liked her, bought her model secretly from the builder, and had that craft duplicated in everything."

"I manned her, officered and armed her, and started on my hunt for pirates."

"I had another mission given me especially by the captain-general, and that was to capture and hang Isola, the Corsair, and bring to Cuba his brother, an arch conspirator, Pedro Casandra."

"With these instructions I went to work, hoisting my private flag with the sanction of the captain-general, and it was only a short while ago that I knew of your vessel being in these waters, finding her to have entered the harbor of New Orleans, when I at once set sail."

"Some days ago an old seaman came to me with a strange story."

"He had been on a vessel that had been wrecked by a storm, and on which, as passengers, were a gentleman, his wife and their twin sons, aged five years."

"In leaving the wreck the family had become separated, the father and one son going in a different boat from the mother and other son."

"This seaman, who shipped with me in New Orleans, had been in the boat with the father, who had reached Boston, but believed his wife and other little boy lost."

"When the boy grew up to be a youth he entered the navy of the United States and became a captain for gallant and meritorious conduct when very young."

"On his vessel the old seaman served for awhile and then remained in port sick, and so shipped with me."

"He found me the counterpart of his former commander, my vessel the same, and strangest of all his captain was Alfred Le Roy, but called Fred Le Roy as I was."

"So he told me of the story of the wreck and all, and I let him know of my career, and now we meet, Alfred, as brothers."

The story was listened to in silence.

The meeting was an affecting one, and none who saw them could doubt that they were brothers, and Duncan Fairfax said, after heartily congratulating each:

"Now I understand, Captain Alfred Le Roy, that you are not crazy; but I assure you I shall have to put a private mark on you to know you apart," and then the story of the planter was told, of their misfortunes, and, as Frederic Le Roy said that he had to go to New Orleans to see if he could get Pedro Casandra, Captain Alfred Le Roy offered his vessel to take the party home, and it was gladly accepted, as Faustine said:

"We hope to get acquainted with you, Captain Le Roy, so there will be no doubt in future."

"Egad, Miss Fairfax, do you know that I deemed you all crazy, or that I was getting so, and I meant to have the surgeon sound my brains," laughed the young officer.

"Is that schooner for sale, Captain Le Roy?" asked the planter, pointing to the Bother.

"No, sir, but she may be, and if so I will let you know," was the answer, and soon after the vessels parted, the United States cruiser heading for Waveside Plantation, and the Bother, under a prize-crew and with the prisoners on board, laying her course for Havana, while the Cuban cruiser, Bride of the Wind, sailed for New Orleans.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CONCLUSION.

UPON arriving in New Orleans Captain Le Roy found that Pedro Casandra had died of his wound, and taking his departure almost immediately he headed for Havana, and then reported to the captain-general the result of his cruise.

He had given orders to the officer in charge of the Bother to have her bought in his name, and at once thoroughly refitted, and the work was nearly completed when he arrived.

When the Bother was ready, he set sail again in the Bride of the Wind, the small schooner following, and one pleasant afternoon ran into the Waveside Harbor, where to his delight the other Bride of the Wind was at anchor, her commander having returned on a visit to Irene Avon, in whom he had become deeply interested.

Most warmly was he welcomed, and inviting all on board the "Faustine"—late the pirate craft Bother—he presented her to Mr. Fairfax to replace the lugger.

But the planter was not to be outdone, and a year after presented to the young captain his daughter as a wife, while Irene at the same time married the "other captain."

Rupert Breslin settled near Waveside, and began the practice of medicine, in which he was more successful than he had been as a pirate surgeon.

Leon became sailing-master of the Faustine, and was happy, as the brave fellow deserved to be, and thus the curtain falls upon the eventful days of piracy in the Gulf.

THE END.

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